

Modern
Islamic
Literature

Edited By

A.I. Makki • Mohammad Anwar Khan

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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PREFACE

The educational system and the current environment coupled with increasing lack of interest and faith in religion, have made the Muslims so much alienated from Islam that they hardly feel a need to study Islamic literature, history, inspiring, true stories, and biographies of Muslim scholars.

An urgent need was felt to compile a comprehensive set of books, which covers all the necessary Islamic materials, and presents an effective collection of Islamic literature from which our Muslim brothers and sisters across the world could learn hugely at home and benefit from them in understanding the true Islamic history and literature, and draw inspirations and beautiful moral behavior.

I was enormously pleased to know that Maulana Mohammad Anwar Khan Al-Qasmi, and A.I. Makki who work for our monthly magazine "Islamic Vision" felt this need and presented this valuable work after a long journey of diligent research and hard work.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no such a pure, holistic, and comprehensive book on the subject that serves this need so extensively and brilliantly. They have added a highly valuable work to the Islamic Library by producing this research-oriented book for the Muslim readers.

I have gone through this book "Modern Islamic Literature" deeply. To my knowledge, this is a highly useful book on the subject, and a must for all those who want to familiarize themselves with the Islamic literature in detail. The editors of this book have collected and edited this unique series proficiently, which you will devour till the very end, once the book is in your hands.

This book is a sign of their good knowledge, accomplishment, hard work, insight and a keen interest in writing.

I pray to Allah that He gives this series a great acceptance and due appreciation in all circles, and makes it beneficial for the Muslim boys and girls.

Shuaibullah Khan

(President of Islamic Vision Academy, Bangalore)

March 13, 2007

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Foreword

Being a final, perfect, and complete religion, Islam offers an all-embracing, comprehensive code of life; so much so that its teachings and directions, thoughts and ideas extend to people from all walks of life in every aspect of their existence. The religion of Islam has left indelible marks in numerous fields of thought and culture. One of the most distinguished parts of the Islamic civilization is literature, which is too vast to be described, and too varied to be covered by a single book. However, efforts have been made in different phases to present the Islamic literature as effectively and thoroughly as possible in almost all living languages of the globe. The work in your hands edited by Maulana Mohammad Anwar Khan Al-Qasmi, and A.I. Makki has much to say about Islamic literature and its beauty, and I think they have been successful in their effort to a great extent.

Maulana Mohammad Anwar Khan, one of the editors of this book, is a righteous Islamic graduate and a highly sensitive and dedicated young scholar, gifted with remarkable abilities and skills both in modern and religious studies.

It is my sincere prayer to Allah that He makes this work a matter of reward for both the editors and give them blessing in their knowledge and act, health and life, and more ability and courage to serve the Muslim community with sincerity, and make all of us die with Iman.

I hope this book to be widely accepted and appreciated by the people and it would prove a great success.

Khalid Saifullah Rahmani

(General Secretary Islamic Fiqh Academy, Hyderabad)

13/03/2007

Introduction

We are coming out with a series of books in English, a treasury of summarized golden classics, exciting stories, fun-filled adventures to cater to the needs of Muslim students, studying in high schools and colleges, to instill in them good reading habits, and encourage them to lead an Islamically wholesome lifestyle in a subtle way.

For the Muslim students, boys and girls, these stories exercise an enchanting quality of their own for each of them teaches the students intelligence, wisdom, forbearance, and perseverance needed in order to achieve the impossible.

They contain words of wisdom and good morals, and how the truth ultimately triumphs over all sorts of wicked and evil people by the Grace of Almighty Allah, and serves to bond them in Unity with the Divine, Omnipresent, Omniscient and the All-knowing, One and only Supreme God – Allah, the Creator of all the living and non-living things on this earth.

They act as an effective tool by introducing to the Muslims about Islam and fill up the gap created by reading the secular literature and books of fiction, and reorient them to the golden age of the Islamic past; and to the golden deeds of our illustrious ancestors who acted as torchbearers of the noble Islamic traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad.

They present a rare account of historical facts and Islamic civilization relevant to all Muslims of all age groups and provide an entertaining read for Muslim children and adults, and offer

an insight into Islamic wisdom to those non-Muslims who are eager to learn more about the Islamic way of life, culture and thought.

They provide a spectacular biographical collection, giving them glimpses by peeping into the lives of some of the greatest Muslim personalities of the past who – by the Grace of Allah – blessed our planet with their knowledge and literature, which acted as reference books for the scholars of the past and are still relevant in the present day, and thus have preserved the history of the Islamic past.

They provide an entertaining narrative of the great Muslim travelers and explorers who contributed outstandingly to the growth of knowledge, and information, enriching the world civilization.

These books are presented after a deep research in an easy, fluent, and flawless English. They are guaranteed to hold the attention of the readers until the last page, for they are based on reliable sources and have the most authentic method of storytelling genre. They are truly indispensable for reading for those students and professionals, who are eager to learn more about the events of how the Religion of Islam shaped the history of our planet.

Mohammad Anwar Khan
Islamic Vision, Bangalore
10.03.2007

Stories

Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni

Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni was a thinker and a creative writer. He lived during the reign of Mahmood Ghaznavi in the later part of the tenth century. He traveled to India and wrote many books about the life and culture of ancient India. It is said that his pen rarely left his hand. He lived to the ripe old age of seventy-eight. Throughout his life, he never took a break from reading, writing and teaching except when it was absolutely necessary. He mastered the Sanskrit language at the age of forty-five. He took great delight in learning about new things.

Once Ali Ibn Eesa, an eminent jurist decided to visit Al-Biruni, when he was sick. He had been told that he was on his deathbed. Upon entering his room, Ali Ibn Eesa recognized that Al-Biruni was in the last stages of his life. Al-Biruni was glad to see his visitor. He told him that there was an issue in Islamic Inheritance Law that they had discussed in the past. He had suddenly realized that Ali Ibn Eesa had been wrong in his understanding of the whole matter.

Ali Ibn Eesa felt compassion for his friend. He asked him whether it was proper for him to discuss a religious matter when he was so ill. Al-Biruni replied, "I know that I am leaving this world, but don't you think that it is better for me to understand the issue in question than die being ignorant of it?" He made Ali Ibn Eesa repeat the inheritance issue and started to explain it to him until he understood it completely.

After they finished the conversation, Ali Ibn Eesa took leave of Al-Biruni and as he was exiting from the house, he heard a loud wail from the people who had gathered by his bedside. He knew immediately that Al-Biruni had expired. In the last moments of his life he had remembered neither his family nor wealth. He had discussed an Islamic issue with the hope that the knowledge of it would spread until it becomes the cause of saving somebody in this life and in the Hereafter.

Learning by Experience

A certain Caliph wanted to test an idea on an unsophisticated person. He asked his guards to scout the desert and bring him a Bedouin Arab. They surrounded the first Bedouin they met in the desert riding a camel. They concluded that he was an unsophisticated man and brought him to the presence of the Caliph.

"I have been told," said the ruler that "Bedouins are ignorant people and they do not know even the simplest things."

"Who has told you that?," asked the Bedouin.

"It was during a discussion with my intellectual advisors."

"If it is intellect you want, the problem is easy enough. Ask me anything you want."

The Caliph ordered a dish of porridge to be brought into the presence of the Bedouin. The Arab tasted it hesitantly and began to eat.

"What is that?," asked the Caliph.

"Something nutritious, which can safely be eaten," said the Bedouin. "Yes, but what is its name?"

"This dish is called as 'experience'."

There was a laugh from the assembled scholars in the court of the Caliph, who had said that the Bedouins were fools.

"And, how have you arrived at this conclusion?," asked the Caliph.

The wise man in our camp, said the Bedouin, always speaks of nutrition in a diet as being dates, water, and experience. I have seen dates and water for I live on them, and since this dish is not dates or water; therefore, it can safely be presumed that this must be experience.

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Repaying Evil with Good

The city of Ahmedabad was slowly limping back to normalcy. However, there were reports of rioting, murder, looting, and arson slowly filtering in from the surrounding villages. Sporadic clashes between Hindus and Muslims would shatter the peace of the city from time to time. Curfews were imposed daily and the people of the city remained indoors. Only a few dared to venture out to seek food and medical help. At other places, the mobs ruled the streets.

The mosque in the heart of the city had somehow escaped the fury of the mob. It stood all alone by itself with nobody to guard it, except for a caretaker. The old solitary figure of a muezzin would walk up dutifully near the minaret of the mosque and would call out the Adhan as he had been doing from the past several years. The electricity to the area had been cut off and his voice was barely heard beyond the four walls of the mosque. Nobody responded to his call to prayer. The muezzin would wait for sometime for somebody to turn up for the congregational prayers. Nobody did. He prayed all alone by himself as he had been doing from the past several days. The rest of his day would be spent reading the Holy Qur'an and he would retire occasionally to his room in the mosque for a meager meal.

One day, as he sat inside the mosque reciting passages from the Holy Qur'an, a Muslim, with whom he was on friendly terms, burst inside the mosque and came to him in a great rage. The mob had set fire to his house and all his belongings. They had chased him all over the street brandishing knives and swords with the intention of killing him. The mob had been led by no other than his long time business rival. He had sought refuge in the house of a Hindu for the night. His host had graciously allowed him access to the terrace, where he has spent the night disturbed by sounds of gunfire and shouting mobs. He had taken leave of his host as soon as the curfew had been lifted for he did not want to endanger his life for sheltering him. Passing through the bylanes, he had made his way to the mosque to seek refuge there until things calmed down a little. He declared to the muezzin, that he would seek out this man and kill him. He would also set fire to the business owned by him.

The muezzin had listened calmly to the man's outburst against the leader of the mob.

"Oh no," he said to his friend, "I am afraid that would not be the right thing to do.

Besides what good would it do to kill him?"

"I would have my revenge," said the Muslim.

"That," said the muezzin "would fetch you nothing. By doing so, you will be killing one man. Retaliation would be the most natural thing to do by somebody in our circumstances. However, the evil of hatred has spread its roots in this city. It is the hatred that the people have

against one another, which has to be rooted out. Our top priority is to restore peace among the people of the city and not to add to the statistics of death by killing one more person. Nevertheless, there is another way of taking revenge against the person who has wronged you. Its effect will be much sweeter and long lasting than the one which you are thinking about."

The Muslim looked very thoughtful at the words of the muezzin, and presently asked, "Well, what shall I do?"

"The answer is simple. Do the man, who has wronged you good at the first available opportunity," came the reply of the muezzin; "you will find it sweeter than revenge; it may bring you less danger. It may also bring you many blessings from the God, most High."

The words of the muezzin had left the Muslim confused. "If I do as you say," he said to the muezzin, "then how is it going to earn me blessings from God, most High?"

The muezzin opened the Holy Qur'an that lay before him and said, "A verse from the Holy Qur'an reads as follows:

"Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become, as it were thy friend and intimate!"

The Muslim looked at the face of the muezzin and said earnestly, "I have known you for a long time now, you never advise people save of what is good. I will try my best to follow your advice."

Several weeks passed. The riots continued and the concerned did their best to bring it under control. But as soon as they brought a rioting area into control, the violence would flare up with renewed vigor in another part of the city. The people of the city did their best to lead normal lives in abnormal times.

One day, the muezzin was resting in the mosque as usual after his noon prayers, when his friend, the Muslim, turned up again to meet him. As soon as he saw the muezzin, he rushed forward, grasped him by his hand in greeting, and said, "I followed your advice and it exactly happened as it has been said in the Holy Qur'an. A few days before, I was passing through one of the localities, when I found a group of Muslims had surrounded the house of a Hindu. They were carrying with them daggers and petrol bombs. They were in the process of setting fire to it. It was the house of the same person, who had driven me away from my house and had set fire to my belongings and shop. I could easily have had my revenge and could have killed him immediately there itself. However, I suddenly remembered the verse that you had read out to me from the Holy Qur'an. Immediately, I intervened and persuaded the mob to leave the man alone. I escorted him to my camp, fed him, and kept him with me overnight under my protection. The next morning, I took him over to his house and collected his belongings and other valuables. I told him to move for a few days into an area, where he would feel safe. The man was so glad that he shook me by the hand and told me that I was a good Muslim and he was proud to have him as my friend."

"Yes," said I, "but you did not think me very good, when you led a mob to my house to loot and burn it a few weeks ago."

"To burn down your house!" said the man, turning pale, at the thought of the problem that he would face with me.

"I told him about the time, and how I had to run for my life."

"But, you still saved my life!" the man now appeared dazed, "I don't understand." After some time he recovered his composure and said, "I am very sorry for what was done to your house and business. However, you have rendered me a great service by repaying good with evil. I will try to undo the wrong that has been done to you. Hereafter, you will work with me in my business."

He forced me to go with him to another camp where Hindus had sought refuge and told them his story. They all made me feel comfortable and treated me as their friend, and shared with me some of the provisions that they had with them. They told me that they now understood that religion was meant to show compassion and goodwill to our fellow beings. It was sad that people should pick up quarrels with each other using religion as a pretext.

The Muslim now looked at the muezzin with a delighted smile, "You did not tell me a lie. I have had the best revenge that I could ever think of. I had thought of them earlier as my enemies, but they are no longer my enemies. I have made friends with all of them"

Honoring an Agreement

During the rule of Khalifah Harun al-Rashid there lived in the City of Baghdad a famous barber known as Ali Sakal. He was famous for his steady hand while cutting people's hair. He was so clever at his work that he could shave a head, trim a beard or a moustache, with his eyes blindfolded, without once drawing blood from the skin of his customers.

Every important person in Baghdad employed him and used his services. Soon, he had such a great deal of work that he became proud and insolent, and would scarcely touch a head whose master was not a nobleman or a courtier in the Caliph's Court.

In those days, the people of Baghdad used wood as a fuel to cook their food and heat water in their homes. It was always scarce and the woodcutters of Baghdad used to travel far in search of wood, and load it on their donkeys and bring it into the city, where it was purchased eagerly by people for their needs. The barber was rich and he used a lot of wood both in his house and the shop, and the woodcutters would always bring the wood to him before anyone else, for they were sure of selling their wood quickly.

One day a poor woodcutter who had just started at his job, brought in a load of wood from the country on his donkey. Ali immediately offered him a price with the following words: "For all the wood that is on the back of the donkey."

The woodcutter agreed and unloaded his wood from his beast and asked for the money. But the barber refused to pay him. "You have not given me all the wood on the back of your donkey," said the barber, "I must have the saddle as well, for that was our agreement."

"How can that be?," said the woodcutter in astonishment.

"The saddle on the back of the donkey is also made up of wood," said Ali, "and I offered the price for all the wood that is upon the back of the donkey."

"Whoever heard of such a bargain?" replied the woodcutter. "It is impossible for me to give you my saddle with the load of wood."

The barber entered into a heated argument with the woodcutter. After exchanging many harsh words with the woodcutter, the barber seized his saddle along with all the wood on the donkey's back and sent away the poor woodcutter in distress.

The woodcutter immediately ran to the office of the Qazi to make his complaint. The Qazi who was one of the barber's customers, refused to listen to him or register his complaint. The woodcutter went to a higher judge who was also one of the barber's customers, and he made light

of the complaint from the distressed woodcutter. At length, he approached a highly respected religious scholar who heard the complaint and thought over the matter carefully. At length, he said that this matter was too difficult for him to decide, as the barber could not be found at fault on grounds of procedure he followed while making the purchase. He advised the woodcutter to put up with his loss.

But, the woodcutter was not disheartened. He got hold of a scribe to write a petition to the Caliph. He decided to present the complaint to the Caliph in person when he attended the next congregational prayers in the Friday mosque. The woodcutter joined the other Muslims for the Friday Prayers in the mosque. Once the prayers were over, the woodcutter went forward and presented his petition to the Caliph. It was the Caliph's habit to read all the petitions presented to him without delay, and it was not long before he summoned the woodcutter to his court to grant him an hearing.

After hearing the woodcutter patiently, the Caliph said, "My friend, the barber has words on his side, and you have justice on yours. The law must be stated in words, and agreements made in words. Agreements must be kept or there would be no faith between man and man. Therefore, the barber must keep all his words." Then, the Caliph called the woodcutter close to him and whispered some words in his ears, which could not be heard by anyone else in the court other than him, and sent him away quite satisfied.

The woodcutter returned to his donkey and they headed towards his home. A few days later, the woodcutter went to the barber as if nothing has happened and said, "I have come along with a companion here to enjoy the favor of being shaved by your skilful hands." After exchanging a few words with the barber, they both settled on the price of shaving the woodcutter and his companion.

Ali Sakal shaved the woodcutter's head, and once that was done, he asked him about his companion.

"He is standing outside," said the woodcutter, "and I will bring him inside in a moment." Accordingly, he went out and returned, leading his donkey into the barber's shop after him by its halter.

"This is my companion," said the woodcutter, "and you must shave him."

"Shave him!" cried out the barber in great rage at this insult. "It is enough that I agreed to shave the head of a low person like you. Do you wish to insult me by asking me to do as much to your donkey? Away with you!" he said and drove the woodcutter and the donkey out of his shop.

The woodcutter immediately went to the Caliph. He was instantly admitted into his presence, and then he related his case.

The Commander of the Faithful ordered his officers to bring Ali Sakal along with his razors to him immediately. After ten minutes, Ali Sakal stood before the Caliph with his shaving bag containing the razors in his hand.

"Why do you refuse to shave this man's companion?" the Caliph questioned the barber. "Was not that your agreement?"

Ali answered "It is true O Caliph that such was our agreement; but I have never come across any person in my life who ever made a companion of a donkey!"

"You may say that," thundered the angry Caliph, "but at the same time, I have never heard of any person in Baghdad who ever thought of insisting upon a saddle being included along with the load of wood as a part of the deal while making a purchase from a woodcutter! Now, it is the turn of the woodcutter to demand that you honor your part of the agreement. You must shave the donkey at once!"

The barber was now frightened about offending the Caliph. He immediately started preparing a large amount of lather from the soap he had brought along with him. Then, he lathered the beast all over the body from head to feet and shaved him in the presence of the Caliph and all the people assembled in his Court. All the courtiers and the noblemen of the Court mocked and laughed at him as he shaved the donkey. Once, the job was done, the Caliph made a present to the woodcutter with a large amount of money and sent him on his way. The story was told all over Baghdad and everyone who heard it praised the justice of the Commander of the Faithful.

The Story of Prophet Salih and the Tribe of Thamud

Prophet Salih was from the tribe of Thamud that had descended from Bani Ad. He was also a descendant of Sam, and was, therefore, an Arab Prophet. His tribe had moved from Yemen to a place called 'Hager', which is close to Madinah Al-Munawwarah. There they built a city known today as "Madain Salih" situated at about 380 kilometers from Madinah Al-Munawwarah.

Like the tribe of 'Ad, they carved their homes on the mountain tops. They had learnt this art of building homes from the tribe of 'Ad. Allah (swt) blessed the people of Thamud with prosperity as He had done to the tribe of 'Ad before them. They had power, abundant riches, with big luxurious gardens filled with plants.

However, they too, like the tribe of 'Ad, after a period of time started worshipping idols and abandoned the worship of One God, Allah, and the God of all mankind. Therefore, Allah (swt) in His Mercy sent to them Prophet Salih, a man among them, as a Messenger of God.

Prophet Salih (as) was from a good family. He was wise, and his people often came to him for advice. They admired

and liked him, and had hopes that one day he would become one of their leaders. They were disappointed at him when he began preaching to them about the worship of One God. They called him a foolish and ignorant man. They even believed that he had been charmed by a magic spell. They were so disappointed at him and angered by his teachings that they stopped from coming near him for he was asking them to stop the worship of the gods of their forefathers.

However, they told him that they would believe in him if he showed them a miracle. But it was not any miracle they wanted to see. They pointed to a large rock. They told Prophet Salih (as) that they wanted to see that rock to be sliced into two, and that they wanted to see a she-camel to emerge from within it. They wanted the she-camel to be ten-months pregnant, tall and attractive. Prophet Salih (as) prayed to Allah (swt) for help. Allah heard his prayers and granted Salih the miracle that was asked by his people, and before their eyes, they saw a huge, unique pregnant she-camel appearing from the rock as it split into two pieces.

Among the onlookers were a number of people of Thamud who witnessed this miracle and some of them believed in the words of Prophet Salih (as) on the spot and became his followers, and started the worship of Allah (swt) and stopped worshipping their idols.

However, most of them continued in their disbelief. There are a number of ancient accounts of this camel and its miraculous nature. In some accounts, it is said that the she-camel used to drink all the water in the wells in one day, and left nothing for the other animals of the people of

Thamud as Allah (swt) had decreed it! In other accounts, it is related that the she-camel produced milk sufficient for all the people of Thamud to drink, on the same day that it drank all their water, leaving none for them.

For a while, Salih's people let the camel graze and drink freely as they had been commanded to do by Allah. However, they hated the camel in their hearts for drinking up all their water. The disbelievers now began complaining that this huge she-camel with its unusual qualities drank most of the water meant for them and their animals, and also frightened their cattle. It left no water for their cattle to drink on the next day, as it was an order from Allah that the camel and the animals of Thamud would drink the water available to them on every alternate day.

They laid a plot to kill the camel. They watched the camel closely, observing all its movements. As the she-camel came to drink at the well, one of them shot it in the leg with an arrow. It tried to escape but was hampered by the arrow. Another followed the camel and struck it with a sword in the other leg. As it fell to the ground, he pierced it with his sword.

The people of Thamud who disbelieved in Prophet Salih and his Message gave the killers of the she-camel a hero's welcome. They cheered them with songs and poetry composed in their praise. They mocked Prophet Salih, but he warned them: "Enjoy life for three more days then the punishment will descend upon you."

All along Prophet Salih was hoping that they would see the error of their ways and turn in repentance to Allah and

change their attitude towards His Message before the three days were out.

Instead, they became confident that nothing would happen to them after they had killed the she-camel of Allah. They plotted to kill him. Nine men were sent to kill Prophet Salih, but Allah (swt) protected him from above by killing all of them, before they could kill Prophet Salih.

The next day, the disbelieving people of Thamud woke with their faces yellow. They were scared. Fear started showing on their faces. The second day, they woke up to find their faces red. Now they were really scared, and started wondering whether Salih's threat would come true. And on the third day, their faces turned black. They knew that they were doomed.

Now, thunderbolts from the sky filled the air, followed by severe earthquakes, which destroyed the entire tribe. The land was violently shaken, destroying all living creatures in it. Neither their strong buildings nor their rock-hewn homes could protect them. All were destroyed before they realized what was happening to them.

As for the people who believed in the message of Prophet Salih (as), they were saved because they had left the place.

According to a Hadith narrated by Ibn Umar while the Prophet Muhammad was passing by Thamud's houses on his way to the Battle of Tabuk, he stopped for some time with his Companions there. The people who were with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saws) fetched water from the wells from which the people of Thamud used to drink.

Thamud as Allah (swt) had decreed it! In other accounts, it is related that the she-camel produced milk sufficient for all the people of Thamud to drink, on the same day that it drank all their water, leaving none for them.

For a while, Salih's people let the camel graze and drink freely as they had been commanded to do by Allah. However, they hated the camel in their hearts for drinking up all their water. The disbelievers now began complaining that this huge she-camel with its unusual qualities drank most of the water meant for them and their animals, and also frightened their cattle. It left no water for their cattle to drink on the next day, as it was an order from Allah that the camel and the animals of Thamud would drink the water available to them on every alternate day.

They laid a plot to kill the camel. They watched the camel closely, observing all its movements. As the she-camel came to drink at the well, one of them shot it in the leg with an arrow. It tried to escape but was hampered by the arrow. Another followed the camel and struck it with a sword in the other leg. As it fell to the ground, he pierced it with his sword.

The people of Thamud who disbelieved in Prophet Salih and his Message gave the killers of the she-camel a hero's welcome. They cheered them with songs and poetry composed in their praise. They mocked Prophet Salih, but he warned them: "Enjoy life for three more days then the punishment will descend upon you."

All along Prophet Salih was hoping that they would see the error of their ways and turn in repentance to Allah and

change their attitude towards His Message before the three days were out.

Instead, they became confident that nothing would happen to them after they had killed the she-camel of Allah. They plotted to kill him. Nine men were sent to kill Prophet Salih, but Allah (swt) protected him from above by killing all of them, before they could kill Prophet Salih.

The next day, the disbelieving people of Thamud woke with their faces yellow. They were scared. Fear started showing on their faces. The second day, they woke up to find their faces red. Now they were really scared, and started wondering whether Salih's threat would come true. And on the third day, their faces turned black. They knew that they were doomed.

Now, thunderbolts from the sky filled the air, followed by severe earthquakes, which destroyed the entire tribe. The land was violently shaken, destroying all living creatures in it. Neither their strong buildings nor their rock-hewn homes could protect them. All were destroyed before they realized what was happening to them.

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They prepared their dough (for baking) and filled their water-skins from it (the water from the wells). The Prophet of Allah (saws) ordered them to empty the water-skins and give the dough prepared by them to their camels. Then, he moved ahead with them until they stopped at the well from which the she-camel (of Salih) used to drink. He warned them against entering into the area where the people of Thamud had been punished, saying: "I fear that you may be affected by what afflicted them; so do not enter into their houses."

In other Ahadith, it is narrated that the Prophet Mohammed (saws) warned his people that should they enter Madain Salih, they should cry to remember what had happened to the people of Thamud. And that if they cannot cry, then, they should force themselves to cry so that they do not become like the disbelievers among the people of Thamud.

Madain Salih still stands today as witness to what had happened to the disbelieving people of Thamud. The Holy Qur'an makes a mention of Prophet Salih (as) and his disbelieving people of Thamud for twenty-six times for the Muslims to learn the lesson that they should bear witness to the worship of Allah, and worship no other gods besides Him.

In another account it is related that Prophet Salih then left for Palestine, and lived and died in Ramalah.

The Advice of a Beggar

Once upon a time, there lived a powerful Sultan who ruled the region of Tartaristan. One day, he decided to go hunting with his courtiers in the forest, which was at some distance away from his palace.

On the road they passed a poor beggar who recognized the Sultan immediately. He called out to him as they were passing: "O Sultan, give me a hundred pieces of silver, and I will give you a piece of good advice."

At first, the Sultan did not pay any attention to the words of the beggar. He thought that this man was probably a fool, or must have taken leave of his senses in making such an outrageous demand. But, when the beggar started following his company, repeating the same cry, he stopped his horse, and turned to the beggar and said, "What advice is this my friend, which you value at such a large sum of money?"

"O mighty Sultan," answered the beggar, "promise me that you will give me the money, and you shall hear of it. Believe me, you will never regret the bargain."

The Sultan expecting to hear something extraordinary from the beggar, directed his treasurer who was with him

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at that moment to count out the money to the beggar, who after receiving it, told him the important maxim: "Begin nothing, without considering what the end may be."

The courtiers were all amused to hear this advice from the beggar and the simplicity of their master for falling a prey to the trap of the beggar. They imagined that the Sultan would take the matter lightly as a jest, or threaten the insolent beggar with some harsh punishment for making a fool of him.

But, very much to their surprise the Sultan appeared neither amused nor angry. Turning to his attendants, he asked them in a serious tone: "Why do you laugh? I saw nothing ridiculous in this good man's advice. On the contrary, his advice appears to me as most wise and valuable. This maxim shall be my rule of conduct in the future. And, I command that it should be engraved upon my plate, and written on all my doors and walls of my palace to constantly remind me of it."

After some months had passed, a wicked noble in the palace who was under the service of the Sultan, overcome by greed and ambition, decided to kill the Sultan and seize his throne. In order to accomplish his objective, he secured the confidence of one of the Sultan's surgeons, to whom he gave a poisoned sharp instrument, saying: "Bleed the Sultan with this instrument and I will give you a thousand pieces of gold; and when I ascend the throne after the Sultan, I will make you my vizier." The court surgeon was tempted by this idea and agreed to the offer, and waited for an opportunity to commit the cowardly crime.

He did not have to wait for long. One day, the Sultan

felt ill, and as it was the practice of the people of those days, he desired to be bled, in order to overcome his illness. The surgeon seized this opportunity, and taking the poisoned instrument with him, hurried to the Royal Chambers to perform this delicate operation.

As usual, he bandaged the arm of the Sultan, and was about to plunge the poisoned weapon into his vein, when his eyes fell on the writing, which had been engraved on the basin that had been brought to him to receive the blood that would be let out from the Sultan's arm during the operation. The words written on the basin were the maxim the beggar had passed to the Sultan, which read "Begin nothing, without considering what the end may be."

On reading those words, the hands of the surgeon started shaking with fear. His face grew pale, and his lips dried as he considered the consequences, which would befall him once the death of the Sultan reached the other people in his palace. There would be an enquiry after his death, and when they come to know about my role in his murder, then his sons and other nobles in the court would put me to a cruel death, and in that event all the gold and honors of this world would be of no use to me! These thoughts passed through his mind like lightning, and in a disturbed state of mind, he returned the poisoned instrument hastily back into his pocket.

His actions and his state of mind were not lost on the Sultan. He asked him why he had changed the instrument by which he was going to carry out the cut in his vein. The surgeon who was now absolutely terrified at his approaching fate, became confused and blurted out the truth in front of

the Sultan begging for his mercy for telling him all the facts. In the end, the surgeon told the Sultan, if it had not been on the words inscribed on the basin, which was brought to him, he would have been dead by now.

The Sultan was true to his word. He spared the life of his surgeon, and dismissed him in disgrace from his court and his kingdom. The traitor who had planned the entire affair was arrested, and after being found guilty was hurried off to be executed.

Once the entire affair was over, the Sultan summoned all his courtiers and told them what had happened: "You see now that the beggar did not ask too much for his advice. The poor man has not been sufficiently rewarded." A search was ordered for the beggar to be found and to be brought before the Sultan. His soldiers hurried out to carry out his command. The beggar was found and brought before the Sultan who heaped on him high honors, and appointed him as his personal advisor for the rest of his life, and commanded that he should live with him in his palace from that day, and eat with him on his table, sharing his every meal. In this way, the beggar became the minister in the court of the Sultan.

Moral of the Story: Always pay heed to the any intelligent advice that is given to you. A clever man learns from others' words of wisdom and profits by them. A stupid man learns wisdom from his own experience, and a fool never learns from both and keeps on repeating his mistakes as before in spite of suffering losses from them!

One Man with Courage Makes a Majority

It is recorded that in the Court of the Great Mughal Emperor Jahangir, prostrating in submission (Sajdah) before him was included among the customs of the court. Every visitor to the court of the Emperor had to first prostrate before him immediately, after being shown into his presence. Once the visitor had followed this practice, he would be allowed to sit near the Emperor and relate to him the reasons for seeking an audience with him.

At the same time, in the days of Jahangir there lived a great scholar of Islam, a man who had been gifted with great wisdom by Allah, and a teacher to the other Muslims about the True Religion of Islam by name Mujaddid Alf Thani Shaykh Ahmad Sarhindi, known popularly as "Shaykh Ahmad" among his pupils. He greatly disliked the practice of Sajdah (prostration) before the Emperor that was being followed in the court of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, and started condemning this practice openly in his speeches and sermons before other Muslims.

He taught them that the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad taught a Muslim to prostrate

only before Allah and not before any human being. He declared that this act was a Shirk (associating partners with Allah) and was forbidden since the day Allah (swt) in His wisdom had selected Prophet Muhammad (saws) as the Prophet for entire mankind and to be His Last Messenger on Earth. He openly appealed to the Emperor Jahangir to immediately put a stop to this practice of prostration in his court. He started touring the entire length and breadth of the Emperor's domain and launched a movement against this practice with his passionate sermons, and in the process putting his life to great risk of disobeying the wishes of the mighty Mughal Emperor.

When this matter was brought to the notice of Jahangir, he summoned Shaykh Ahmad to his Court. Shaykh Ahmad agreed immediately to present himself before the Emperor. On reaching his Court, he found Jahangir seated on his throne with all its royal splendor, and the court was packed completely with his courtiers of both high and low rank waiting to act upon the orders of the Emperor. Shaykh Ahmad - unlike other visitors - stood at his ground and greeted Jahangir with the word "Assalamu Alaikum." At this the Emperor flew into a rage and demanded from him an explanation to his misconduct for not following the procedure that was decreed by him for people to pay their reverence to the Royal Court that was being held under his rule.

At this, Shaykh Ahmad replied: "My head can never bow before anyone except its Creator. This forehead can be placed on dust and earth only for Allah, the Al-Qahhar. There is no power besides Him worthy of deserving this act of prostration."

As soon as Shaykh Ahmad uttered those words, it only added to the fuel of the Emperor's wrath. He did everything within his power to convince him, and compel him by the might of his court and his soldiers that he had the power of life and death over his subjects, and he would have him beheaded for not following his orders. However, the power of his faith in Allah was such that Shaykh Ahmad refused to yield before the Emperor. At last, at the advice of his courtiers, the Emperor who had decided upon beheading him, acted against his better judgment, and had him imprisoned in the Fort of Gwalior.

After six months Jahangir was compelled to release him on account of a certain urgent requirement and needs of his own that needed the services of Shaykh Ahmad, and invited him to present himself in the court. The Shaykh agreed to go on the condition that the Emperor along with his courtiers listened to what the Shaykh had to say regarding the practice of prostration that was practiced in his court. Jahangir had no other alternative but to give in to his demand. The Shaykh on reaching the Jahangir's court gave a passionate speech against this ungodly practice that was being followed in Jahangir's court.

The Emperor saw the light and logic behind the words of this great scholar, and declared that henceforth, the practice of Sajdah would be forbidden forever in his court, and agreed with the Shaykh that prostration before any human beings was a Shirk of the highest order, and was remorseful for allowing it to happen in his court until that day, and repented for his decree, which had been passed earlier in his ignorance of the words of the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

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(saws), and from that day purged the court from all practices of idolatry that were being followed in his court. After this the Shaykh Ahmad set about accomplishing the task that was required by Jahangir.

Moral of the Story: One man with the courage and the moral strength to stand up for his convictions and faith in Allah can make a difference in the life of thousands of people, by enjoining on them what is good and forbidding them from what is wrong in the light of the teachings of the religion of Islam.

The Khalifah and the Faith of the Shepherd Boy

It is recorded in a story narrated in Imam Ghazali's *Ihya-ul-'Ulum*, on an incident that took place during the life of Khalifah Umar (ra). It is said in this book, that the Khalifah was traveling from Madinah to the City of Makkah. On the way, he noticed one early morning, a Bedouin boy tending to his flock of sheep at the base of a hillock. The Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen wanted to test whether the teachings of the Holy Qur'an had at least in its basic form reached this boy who was living in a remote corner in the Land of Arabia and to what extent he followed them in his life. He stopped by the road where the boy was tending to his flock and asked him whether he would like to sell him one of the lambs in his flock. The shepherd boy immediately answered to him in the negative. "But,why?" asked the Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen who was momentarily caught unprepared, and clearly taken aback, by the boy's straightforward answer. "Why??? - Because they do not belong to me!" answered the shepherd boy, "They belong to my master, and I am his slave!" "How will that matter?" asked the Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen, "Take this money, and give a lamb to me; and go and tell your master that some wolf from the mountains has snatched away his lamb." The shepherd boy was amazed at the Khalifa's suggestion, and stared at him open-eyed with surprise, and wonder written on his face. The poor

shepherd did not know that he was talking to the great Umar, the Caliph, and the "Commander of the Faithful" of the entire Muslim world. After some time, he said, "I can cheat my master over there," he said pointing to the other side of the hillock, "for he cannot see me now." "But, can I," he stressed, "cheat the Great Lord, the Almighty Allah who is overlooking both of us now, and listening on to our conversation?" The shepherd boy was an illiterate boy. He had never read the Holy Qur'an. But, the Teachings of Islam that had been preached by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saws) had reached his ears, and had clearly touched his heart and soul, he believed in them in his mind for he had been told by the others who were more learned than him about the Holy Qur'an about the words of the Book, which said that Allah (swt), "knows what the soul of the man whispers to him," and that, "He was closer to him than his jugular vein," and that when, "three persons speak not privately together, but He is their fourth; nor five... but He is their sixth; nor fewer, nor more, but wherever they be He is with them." He must also have heard that none can give away or sell anything, which does not belong to him.

The Shepherd's reply deeply impressed the Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen who used to lead a more severe Islamic way of life than the shepherd boy - as he was one of the Close Companions of the Holy Prophet (saws) and had been appointed by the people of Madinah to lead them as their rightly guided Caliph after the Holy Prophet (saws) - for he was among the few people among the Companions who went to great lengths to follow all the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the preachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saws). According to the narrative, the Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen was so moved by the reply of the boy, and

his Faith in the teachings of Islam that "Tears rolled down his cheeks." He tenderly asked the boy to lead him to his worldly master who owned him, and the owner of the flock of sheep. On meeting the owner, he asked him, "How much did you pay for this slave?" "So much," replied the owner. "Here is the money, take it, and let this boy go his way as a free man." The boy became a free man, and the Khalifah went his way. However, we should all ask ourselves the question that how many of us whether we be Muslims or non-Muslims, holding different positions, in different walks of life, and the students of good schools and colleges, conduct our lives in the manner of the simple shepherd boy of Arabia - who lived in the early days of Islam - and reached that state of mind, or the attitude that this simple Bedouin boy had reached 1400 years back, and have felt the same sense of duty towards Allah (swt) in following the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Righteousness, and hold ourselves responsible to Him, in all that we have thought and done in our daily lives? The Month of Muharram has passed us.

It was the beginning of the month of a New Year of the Islamic Calendar. It is usually the practice of people around the world to make New Year Resolutions at the beginning of the every New Year to be better persons than they were the year before, in our daily lives. In case, you have forgotten to make your New Year Resolution in the Month of Muharram, then let us add more force to our lives to resolve ourselves in the Month of Rabi Ath-Thani to live our lives according to the Teachings of the True Religion of Islam, as taught to us by the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad (saws)!

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The Story of the "Good" and the "Bad"

It happened that a long time ago, two youths left their home in Persia to travel to foreign lands. They knew that the journey would be long and exhausting. Therefore, each carried in his bag enough provisions to last them for many days. One of the youth was called as "Khayr", (Good), and true to his name in the Persian language; he had all the good qualities. The other youth had, unfortunately, been named by his parents as "Sharr," which means "Bad," and he had qualities in his heart that were just as bad as his name for it was always filled with wicked thoughts, which made him do wicked deeds.

As they traveled on their journey, Sharr would on some pretext or another always managed to feed out of his companion's bag. His companion being true and kind-hearted by nature, shared with him all his food and drink. This continued until the day came when Khayr was left without any food or water in his bag. He soon found out that his companion on his journey had no intention of sharing the provisions that he carried in the bag with him. They both traveled in the scorching desert and Khayr was secretly hoping that he would find a well, having water with which he would quench his thirst.

In the meantime, Sharr started eating from his provisions

and drank the water he carried with him and refused on some excuse or the other to share them telling him that they would soon come to a village or an oasis, where they both could refill their stock of food and water. This continued for seven days, until Khayr went without water in the hot desert and still there was no green oasis or a village in sight. He saw his companion secretly drinking from the water bag that he carried with him. Khayr realized he had been tricked but there was nothing he could do about it. He bravely swallowed all his bitterness against his companion. However, with every step he took, his strength began to diminish for he had been without the food and water for several days now.

Khayr had in his possession two flame-colored rubies worth a king's fortune. Tortured by thirst, he took them out of his bag and offered him to Sharr, pleading with him to share some of the water he carried with him in return for the rubies that he had. But Sharr, true to his name, told him: "Here you are begging me for water in return for the rubies, but when we reach an inhabited place, and regain your strength, you will forcibly take them back from me. Therefore, I cannot trust you and offer you my water."

Khayr begged and pleaded with him, until Sharr relented somewhat and said: "If you want some of my water, I demand from you a different sort of jewels with the help of which you cannot reclaim your rubies."

Khayr asked him to spell out exactly what he had in mind. "Your eyes!" The villain replied, "You will admit that they are far more precious than all the jewels, which you carry in your pocket. Sell me your eyes, in exchange

of water; otherwise there will be no drink for you! Now, leave me alone!"

When Khayr heard this, he was shocked. This man was asking for his eyes, which would blind him for his life. He begged and pleaded with Sharr in vain that he would not ask his rubies back, when they reached the nearest town as he suspected. "For the sake of Allah! Give me some of the water, before I die in this hot desert for thirst."

He soon realized that he could not move Sharr's cruel heart with his pleading. Finally, when he felt that he would no longer be able to control his thirst, he became desperate; he turned to Sharr and said: "All right, go ahead and do your worst, but give me some water to drink!"

No sooner had Khayr spoken those words, Sharr took out from his pocket a gleaming knife and attacked his unhappy victim and plunged his weapon in the eyes of Khayr. His face turned red with blood and he started to cry out in pain. Sharr calmly relieved him of his two precious rubies and all the other valuables he carried with him and without offering him the promised water left him unconscious in the sand, his face covered with blood.

As luck would have it, the Prince of Kurds had, at that moment, pitched his tent nearby. In this area hidden in the sand dunes was an oasis known only to a few people who could find it. It was not far from the spot where Khayr lay unconscious in the sand, his face covered with blood. At that moment, the daughter of the Prince of Kurds had gone to the well to collect some water in her pitcher, when

she accidentally came upon the youth lying on the sand in an unconscious state, his face covered with blood.

The sight of all the blood frightened her. Summoning up her courage, she took some water from the pitcher and wiped the blood from the face of Khayr, and put a few drops of the cool precious fluid between his parched lips. Khayr now revived gratefully, drank from the pitcher the refreshing water until he almost emptied it. Meanwhile his savior who was examining the wound in the eyes of Khayr, noticed the wound had penetrated the flesh and had not damaged the eyeballs. She carefully bandaged his eyes with the cloth, which she carried with her and with the help of her servants conducted him into her father's tent.

The Prince of Kurds was a wise man with much experience of the world. He examined the wounds on the eyes of the stranger and instructed his daughter to go to a nearby tree and cut a tender stem from one of its branches, and crush it. The juice of the stem will restore his eyesight completely.

His daughter did as she was told. She cut the stem and after crushing it, extracted the precious juice and dropped the liquid into the eyes of Khayr. And, true to the words of the Prince of the Kurds, his eyesight was restored back to normal within the fifth day without any trace of a wound. Khayr could hardly believe his luck. Allah, the Almighty, had indeed been very kind to him.

For a long time, Khayr stayed with the Kurds as their guest. He rose early every morning and assisted them in all their tasks and soon endeared himself to them. One

day, the chief of Kurds asked him to relate his adventures in the desert. Khayr told him the whole story - how Sharr had betrayed him, refused him a drink of water and had stolen the two rubies from him. When the chief heard the story, he thanked Allah, the Almighty, for delivering Khayr away from harm and vowed in his heart to protect the youth as long as he stayed with them.

After sometime the Kurds broke camp in order to move to other fertile areas in the desert. Khayr who had by now learned many things from the Chief of Kurds took some stem and the leaves from the plant in the desert, which had cured his eyes. He filled two leather bags with him. Since, Khayr was good at heart, he hoped that he could relieve some person from his distress with the precious plant that he carried with him.

On their way to another valley in search of an oasis, the tribe of Kurds came to a town, which was in deep mourning. The only daughter of the king of the land was blinded by an accident and the king had it proclaimed all over his kingdom that: He who cures my daughter out of her blindness will be accepted by me as my son-in-law. Many doctors who had tried to cure her out of her blindness had failed in all their attempts. When Khayr heard the news, he immediately volunteered his services to the king, and with the help of the precious cargo that he had carried with him soon cured the princess out of her blindness and restored her normal eyesight.

The miraculous cure brought about by Khayr made her father overcome by gratefulness to Allah, and uttered the word of thanksgiving to the Almighty, and true to his word,

he married his daughter to Khayr. The chief of the Kurds was told to stay in the town and act as his bodyguard to which he readily agreed, and named Khayr his heir apparent to his throne.

When the old king died, Khayr ascended the throne. He was a just ruler and was loved by all his subjects. One day, Khayr decided to ride to a garden outside his town, when he noticed a man approaching him, who had precious rubies, which he wanted to sell to the king. Khayr immediately recognized the man as he approached him. It was none other than Sharr.

Khayr could no longer hold himself. "Shame on you!" he shouted at him. "Look at me carefully, I am the same man whom you robbed and blinded in the desert; and had left me to die in the desert and the rubies, which you want to sell me originally belonged to me. Look at me now! You wanted to kill me, but Allah, the Almighty destined that I would be the king of this land and gave me a crown. And you! You thought you were murdering me, and you have now become your own murderer."

Sharr realized with horror, the folly that he had done. He implored the king: "Be merciful! Forgive me! Forget the evil that I had done to you in the past." His pleadings moved the heart of Khayr. He readily forgave him and gave him back the two rubies that he had taken from him as a present, when he promised to stay away from evil deeds in the future and let him go.

But he did not go very far. The Chief of Kurds who was his bodyguard ran behind him, and killed him. But before killing him he said: "Khayr is so good that he thinks

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But he did not go very far. The Chief of Kurds who was his bodyguard ran behind him, and killed him. But before killing him he said: "Khayr is so good that he thinks

of good even of wicked people like you! However, you are evil through and through and nothing but evil can ever come from you!" He searched the dead man, and found the two rubies and returned it back to Khayr.

When Khayr asked him the reason for killing Sharr after he had forgiven him, he said; "You are a good man and your nature is such that you will even forgive your worst enemy. Sharr was a wicked man and his nature was such that he would have plotted against you as soon he was out of harm's reach. And, as your bodyguard, my nature is such that I should be suspicious of all those persons who can be your enemies in the future and ruin your kingdom. Therefore, I felt that I was duty bound to kill him, even after you have forgiven him."

Khayr lived long and ruled the kingdom for many years. His people received nothing but good from him, and peace, happiness and justice reigned throughout his kingdom.

Moral Of The Story: If you hear that a mountain has moved, believe it: but if you hear that a man has changed his character, believe it not!

The Faith of Julaybeeb

Everyone knew that Julaybeeb was a poor man. He did not have decent clothes to wear. He would walk barefoot and often go hungry. He possessed no status, lineage, wealth or family. He did not have a roof to shelter him. During the night he would sleep in a mosque and drink from the water kept for wayfarers to quench his thirst. He would sleep folding his arm under his head on the rough, uneven ground of the mosque. However, he always remembered Allah, and he would constantly recite passages from the Holy Qur'an in order to memorize them. He would always be present in the first row in the mosque during the congregational prayers and on the forefront of every battle fought under the leadership of the Holy Prophet (saws).

One day the Messenger of Allah (saws) noticed Julaybeeb. He called him by his name and told him, "O Julaybeeb, will you not marry?"

Julaybeeb replied, "And, who will give me his daughter O Messenger of Allah? I am a man without any wealth or any position in the society."

The Messenger of Allah directed Julaybeeb to go to one of the Ansars of Madinah and say to him, "The Messenger of Allah sends his greetings of peace to you and requests you to marry me your daughter."

The name of the Ansari proposed by the Holy Prophet (saws) was from a noble household. He was known for his lineage and enjoyed a good position in the society. When Julaybeeb carried the Prophet's message to him, he replied, "And peace be upon the Messenger of Allah. O Julaybeeb, how can I marry my daughter to a person like you, who has neither wealth nor status?"

His wife who heard the news remarked in astonishment, "Marry my daughter to Julaybeeb! He who has neither wealth nor status!"

However, the daughter of the Ansari heard the words of Julaybeeb. They contained a message of the Messenger of Allah. She was a believing Muslim and she knew the words of the Holy Prophet (saws) had to be obeyed instantly.

She said to her parents, "Do you turn down a request made by the Messenger of Allah? By Allah, I will not do it. I will marry Julaybeeb and will have nobody else as my husband."

Her parents agreed to the marriage. The wedding was celebrated. On their wedding night, a caller was going round in the streets of Madinah announcing a forthcoming battle. Julaybeeb heard the call and responded without delay. He set out armed for the battleground. During the course of the battle, he managed to kill seven of the enemy soldiers

and was martyred. He had embraced death responding to a call from the Messenger of Allah.

After the battle, the Messenger of Allah was taking a count of those who were martyred. His Companions began to inform him of those who died during the course of the battle. They forgot to mention Julaybeeb among the dead. Nevertheless, the Holy Prophet (saws) remembered him and asked about him. When he was told of his death, he said, "But I have lost Julaybeeb." He found Julaybeeb's corpse in the battlefield. His face was covered with dust. He wiped the dust off his face and said, "You killed seven, and then you were killed! You are from me and I am from you..." And, the Messenger of Allah repeated the second part three times.

Julaybeeb's faith and his love for the Messenger of Allah earned him martyrdom. He died content and happy for having obeyed the call of the Prophet and earned himself a place among the martyrs of Islam.

The Story of a Pilgrim

It is related in a story that a pilgrim ran out of money during his journey to Makkah. He was unable to buy his food. He became extremely hungry. Weak with exhaustion, he started wandering in the streets of Makkah looking for work to sustain himself. Unable to find any, he feared that he would die of hunger. One day, while going around looking for work, he happened to come across an expensive necklace. It was lying in the street. It was clear that somebody had lost it. He put it in his pocket and headed for the Sacred Mosque to offer his prayers.

On the way, he came across a man announcing to everyone he met that he had lost a necklace. The pilgrim asked the man to describe the necklace to him. The man who had lost the necklace described it perfectly leaving no room for any doubt. The pilgrim gave him the necklace without taking any reward from him. In the Holy Mosque, he prayed to Allah, "I have given the necklace to the man for Thy sake, so compensate me with what is better." Later, he found some work to sustain himself during his stay in Makkah and earn money for his journey back home.

At the end of his Pilgrimage to Makkah, he decided to head for home. He went to the seashore to board a boat, which would take him back to his country. After a few

days at sea, the boat was suddenly seized by a violent storm. Huge waves and heavy winds dashed against the hull and crashed into the boat smashing it into pieces. Everybody aboard was thrown into the sea. As luck would have it, the pilgrim found a piece of wood and clung on to it for dear life. The violent wind washed him ashore onto an island.

Most of the people living in the island were Muslims. When they heard the story of the stranded pilgrim, they felt sorry for him and accommodated him in a house on the island. The people of the island had also built a mosque for their congregational prayers. The pilgrim would join them everyday in their daily prayers. He would pray to Allah and waited for a ship to visit the island, so that he could continue on his journey to his home.

One day, he found some parchments in the mosque, which had passages from the Holy Qur'an written on it. He started reciting the passages from the Holy Qur'an in a melodious voice. The Muslims of the island were impressed with his recitation. They begged him to teach their children the Holy Qur'an. The pilgrim agreed and took a salary for his services. At another time, the people in the mosque found the pilgrim writing Arabic in a neat calligraphic script. Impressed, they asked him to teach their children to write. He agreed and started teaching the children how to write for a salary.

Over time, the islanders began to realize that the services of the pilgrim had become invaluable to them. They were reluctant to let him go back to his country of origin. They

decided to get him married to a girl on the island so that he could live with them and drop the idea of returning to his home. They came to him and proposed that he marry a girl. She was an orphan and her father had been a good man. The pilgrim agreed and the marriage was solemnized.

When he met his wife, he was surprised to find that she was wearing the exact necklace that had been in his possession for a few hours in Makkah. He asked her to tell the story of the necklace. She said that her father lost it in Makkah and a man found it and returned it to him. She said that her father would always pray to Allah to bless his daughter with a husband like the honest man who had returned him the lost necklace. The pilgrim informed his wife that he was the same man who had returned the necklace to her father.

Moral of the Story: If one abandons a thing for the sake of Allah, then Allah will compensate him with something that is better and lasting in value.

The Hajj Pilgrims of the Burning Ship

(A terrible tragedy took place near Jeddah harbor on May 21, 1930, which has passed almost unnoticed, and its details consigned to the dustbins of history. The French liner S.S Asia, carrying Hajj pilgrims had caught fire off the Jeddah coast. One hundred and twelve passengers of the one thousand five hundred perished, some of them by fire and others had been drowned trying to escape the naked flames. This is the story told by Captain Marchandau, the captain of the ship, who refused to leave the vessel until rescue work of the passengers had been fully completed.)

Marchandau, captain of the French liner S.S Asia, was a French seaman who had spent thirty-three years of his life in the sea. He was carrying this time a human cargo of one thousand five hundred Hajj pilgrims from Jeddah to the Red Sea ports, and would have finished his voyage in Djibouti, in French Somaliland. His passengers, Arabs and Somalis, were embarking aboard the ship carrying with them their possessions and had settled themselves aboard the 5,890-ton vessel.

Captain Marchandau had spent years transporting Muslim Pilgrims bound for Hajj. He had carried them every year across the sea from the ports in the Red Sea and

decided to get him married to a girl on the island so that he could live with them and drop the idea of returning to his home. They came to him and proposed that he marry a girl. She was an orphan and her father had been a good man. The pilgrim agreed and the marriage was solemnized.

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Captain Marchandau had spent years transporting Muslim Pilgrims bound for Hajj. He had carried them every year across the sea from the ports in the Red Sea and

would take them to Jeddah. During this time, he had come across all types of passengers, young and old, women and children, the rich and the poor who had carefully accumulated their savings in preparation for the day, when they would make their journey to the Holy City of Makkah, and return to their homes by the sea route.

He had seen many pilgrims during his time in the sea. They would come aboard small liners and tramp steamers huddled on the decks, bravely enduring the hot sun by the day and never complaining about the sweeping cold winds across the sea, which would attack them by the night. He would watch them as they disembarked in the Port of Jeddah, and plod into the city. From there, they would be in charge of Arab guides, who would pilot them to Makkah.

When the pilgrimage was over, they would come back trailing across the forty-six miles journey from Makkah to Jeddah, the rich traveling on camels, and the poor tramping patiently along with the caravan trails, back to their ships. The ships in turn would take them to their homes. They would come aboard the ship, their eyes burning with the happiness of a dream fulfilled. Watching them, Marchandean would often feel a strong desire surging within him to visit the Holy City of Makkah and see it for himself. However, he knew that the Holy city was forbidden for non-Muslims.

Marchandean had a crew of eighty-six seamen to assist him in piloting the ship. They had left Marseilles on April 5, to carry the Hajj pilgrims from Djibouti to Jeddah. The one thousand five hundred passengers on board would be covering a distance of nine hundred miles across the sea. He had seen all of them safely ashore and he had waited

impatiently anchored in the Red Sea awaiting their return. Now that all of them were aboard, they only had to make the return journey across the sea before heading back for Marseilles. Both the captain and the crew were longing for the day when they would be back in their homes with their families.

At eight o'clock, that evening Captain Marchandean was resting in his cabin. His ship would sail early next morning and he wanted to snatch a few hours' rest before going up to the bridge early in the morning to prepare for the journey ahead. He was pleased that everything was proceeding according to plan. As he settled down on his bed, he heard the sound of running footsteps outside his cabin. In less than five minutes later, somebody was pounding heavily on his cabin door with a shout, "Fire has broken out in one of the second-class cabins, Sir!. And, It is spreading rapidly!"

The Captain muttered an exclamation of dismay, and hurriedly put on his jacket and headed towards the bridge of the ship. His first officer waiting there reported briefly to him that the fire was out of control and was sweeping across the ship.

Looking down on the decks below, the captain saw that the smoke was pouring out. Some of the passengers had come out and they were watching the smoke with signs of panic. Many of them had never been on sea before, and had never expected to encounter dangers on a journey to the Holy Lands. They had herded themselves on the deck and some of them were talking fearfully among themselves. The cloud of smoke from the ship was rising into the skies above.

He had to get them all out of the ship safely. For that the lifeboats should be launched immediately. Then he gasped in horror as he noticed that the port side of the ship, where the lifeboats had been kept was ablaze as well. It was impossible to launch them. Tell the wireless operator to immediately send out an S.O.S message, he ordered. There are enough ships around us to come to our rescue and at least take off the passengers, he said to his first officer. There should be no danger. There were at least six ships in the immediate vicinity; four were British and two French. He had anchored a mile away from shore and they were all at a distance of less than half-a-mile away from his ship. If he could keep the flames under control until help arrived, at least there would be no loss of life.

With these thoughts in mind, he started ordering his crewmembers to concentrate on bringing the fire under control. The seamen made heroic efforts to cope up with the challenge before them. They were dragging a hosepipe towards the flames as they swept across the deck. Seawater spluttered out of the nozzle and it was directed towards the raging fire, but it had no effect. The seamen fell back, shielding their faces with their arms to protect them from the fierce heat.

Marchandau ordered the life boats on the starboard side of the ship to be lowered. As the first dropped down to the level of the deck, there was a mad rush towards it. About eighty men and women filled the boat until it was packed more than its capacity. With great misgivings, he ordered the lifeboat to be lowered immediately into the water. As the lifeboat began to move slowly on its journey

downwards, its occupants began to panic. They started to jostle against one another all eager to get away from the danger, and the lifeboat lurched crazily in midair. Those on board were flung into the sea as the boat dangled helplessly in midair. The seacoast of Jeddah was infested with sharks, and they immediately zeroed in on to their targets. Few among the passengers could swim. From the bridge, Marchandau could make out the sea monsters swimming among the drowning people. He watched the scene below from the bridge. Every now and then, there would be a scream, then a struggle as the swimmers attempted to get away from the sharks, and then a head would disappear under water. He ordered the remaining lifeboats to be lowered into water. Help had arrived from other ships. Lifeboats from other ships were cruising around the burning ship picking up the survivors who had been thrown overboard. Many of passengers saved had broken limbs, injuries that had been caused, when they had been thrown against one another as they fell out of the lifeboat.

Once more, the scene was repeated aboard the burning ship. There was a mad rush towards the lifeboats. The crew struggled with the rush of passengers to top the lifeboats from overcrowding. However, they were few in number as against the surging crowd of passengers. Again, the passengers had overcrowded another lifeboat. When an attempt was made to lower it, the same tragedy was repeated all over again. All its occupants were pitched into the sea and the cruising lifeboats rushed to reach the wretched people before they were drowned or were claimed by the sharks.

Marchandean had now given up all hope of saving his vessel. Many of lifeboats in the ship had been burnt in the blaze. The panic among the passengers made it difficult for him to operate the existing boats. His only hope lay in the Arab dhows and rescue boats circling the burning ship to save the passengers. Meanwhile, the heat on the deck had become unbearable. Many of his crew had stripped to the waist as they urged the pilgrims to down the ropes that had been slung on the board from the rescue vessels. Most of the pilgrims were scared to go down the rope. The few who dared climbed down into willing hands waiting below to save them and they were safely lifted into the boats.

Seeing that the others were safe, there was a rush to get down the ropes. With the heat, getting intense many of them leaped into the water hoping to be saved by the cruising lifeboats below. Many of the boats, packed to the full with passengers, had to return to their ships to unload the pilgrims or risk being sunk.

Some of the Muslims, however, remained unperturbed by the panic. Despite the fury that raged around them, they had lined themselves for the Isha prayers. Their prayer rugs stretched out in front of them, they said their prayers calmly reading out as usual in Arabic, passages from the Qur'an, bowing from the waist and prostrating before the Almighty God, completely indifferent to the death that was creeping up to them.

With the words, Allah is Great, and There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet, and delivering their fate into the hands of the Merciful God, they lined up to lower themselves from the ropes, which swayed by the side of the ship.

Members of the crew moved among them urging them to save themselves. Insha Allah, (If Allah wills) they said calmly. Some of them continued to pray.

While talking about the disaster afterwards, Marchandean admitted that the act of prayer by the Muslims amidst the confusion was the most heroic incident he had ever seen in his life!

While the rescue work was in progress, several Arabs in the surrounding dhows made themselves conspicuous by their bravery. Among them was Abdul Malik who had arrived on the scene, when the pilgrims were frenzied with fear and with his swaying mast bumping against the blazing sides of the ship, he began his rescue work.

Many of the pilgrims were too frightened to jump into the dhow or climb down the ropes. Therefore, Abdul Malik clambered aboard the burning liner and descended repeatedly with the weak, the women, children, and the helpless old men. When his dhow was packed to the full, he hoisted sail and headed towards the nearest ship in the harbor. He returned soon, to pick more passengers from board of the ill-fated ship. Three times, he took away a heavy load of passengers in his dhow to the waiting ships. He must have saved at least one hundred and fifty passengers before he made his fourth trip to the blazing liner.

As he worked, the mast of his dhow suddenly caught fire. His men hacked it down, while Abdul Malik continued to lower the pilgrims into his dhow. Then, while trying to help an old man, the deck beneath him cracked. There was a yell and Abdul Malik along with the old man fell into the raging flames.

Rescue work continued, the crewmembers, the British and the French rescue workers excelled one another in acts of heroism and bravery. The crewmembers and the captain were the last to leave. Many of them climbed down into the waiting lifeboats and others threw themselves overboard to escape the inferno, which had almost engulfed the entire ship. In the morning, a few hours later the ship was still blazing. Heavy clouds of smoke rolled over the seas where scores of pilgrims had died to escape the fire. It was after three days that the fire aboard the ship burned itself out leaving in its place a charred wreck. Meanwhile, a roll call was taken by Arab police officers on the shores of the Jeddah Port. After the roll call had ended, it was found that one hundred and twelve pilgrims had perished along with the ship. All the crewmembers had been saved.

The Amir of Jeddah held an enquiry into the fire, and tried to find out the cause of the fire. But, no one could say how the fire was started, and the enquiry closed with a tribute to the brave men, who had worked so hard and heroically to save the pilgrims of the burning ship. Captain Marchandau and his crewmembers returned to Marseilles in another French liner.

Today, the story of the burning ship is but a memory in Jeddah. Among those who had witnessed the burning of the ship at close quarters, relate a tale of horror of frenzied pilgrims jumping overboard, and about the devout Muslims kneeling on the deck praying to Allah. With the passage of time, the tale that has survived will also be wiped out for anyone to recall and remember. It will be as if the incident had never taken place at all.

History

The Nizams Of Hyderabad

This is the story of a way of life, based on age-old customs and traditions, which many may find difficult to understand. It is the story of a life of grandeur beyond reality, of untold riches that one often comes across in the stories of Arabian Nights. Nevertheless, it is a human document based on history. Its surroundings are feudal, and the main characters of the story, by prevailing standards of democracy, would be called as benevolent autocrats, however, absolute masters of the territories under their rule.

It is also the story of a king who was known to the world as the Seventh Nizam, and counted among one of the richest people in the world; a ruler who in the advancing years of his life gave up his wealth and preferred the simpler joys of life. He gave freely from his wealth millions of rupees in charity for those who needed it, and yet some people persisted in the belief that he was a miser!

He believed in firmly honoring commitments and treaties that he and his ancestors had entered with the British rulers nearly a century before him. The British counted him as a

friend and their "Faithful Ally". However, during the hour of his need they had little to offer him but advice. When he was on the verge of loosing his kingdom, they deserted him leaving him to fend for himself. They had no time to listen to his needs. He never complained!

He was born and bred in a royal household - a Muslim of Turkoman descent - and with a lineage, which traced its ancestry all the way back to the First Caliph of Islam and at the end of his rule, he stood far above the lesser men who abandoned him at the most important junctures in his life. Like his ancestors, he believed in being humble in victory, and dignified in defeat. He firmly believed in God and took matters of religion seriously, attending to his religious duties until the last moments of his life. In the past, many kings have ruled India, but among them, he was unique.

The State of Hyderabad was a premier princely state, measuring 82,700 square miles, until the British left India in 1947. In the ancient times, Pliny, the Roman writer who lived in the first century CE records that the people country of "Andhras" were a powerful even before his time. They had a large army and thirty fortified cities. The country became very wealthy and traded with the West. Since early times, in the checkered history many rulers ruled South India. While, Delhi had always been the seat of power, the Deccan in the south, was the glittering prize.

The Deccan with its rich booty, and its magnificent riches, was the chief attraction for all the rulers of India from the North and the Northeast. Among the first to rule the Deccan from the North were the Nandas, and then

came the Mauryas. Next came Ashoka who taught India its first lesson in non-violence. Then, it was the turn of the Delhi Sultans. Of these was Alauddin, the second of the Khilji Dynasty who carried with him a rich haul of treasures during his expedition to the Deccan. However, time washed out the Khiljis from the pages of Indian history, and the other Muslim rulers of the Tughlaq Dynasty held sway over many parts of South India. In 1351, Muhammad bin Tughlaq died in his bed with the entire country in rebellion. New Kingdoms sprang all over the Deccan, which became an open hunting ground for military adventurers for the Deccan remained even then as the most glittering prize of the Indian subcontinent.

A hundred and seventy five years later, the Mughals came to power in Delhi and ruled India. The last of the Great Mughals was Aurangzeb. It was during his reign, a child was born in the family of the Qazi of Bukhara who migrated to India to serve under the Mughal throne. The child was the Qazi's grandson. The Emperor had personally named him as Mir Qamruddin. When at the age of six, he visited the Court of Aurangzeb along with his father. The Emperor awarded him a monthly income for the lad and predicted a great future for him. To the father, the Emperor had said, "The Star of Destiny shines on the forehead of your son."

At the age of sixteen, Mir Qamruddin hunted a tiger without any help and was given the title of Bahadur, which means "valiant." When only nineteen, he distinguished himself as a soldier in the army of Aurangzeb and was appointed as a Commander of a five thousand horse

cavalry. There was little wonder in the Court when, at the age of twenty-six, he became the Emperor's Viceroy in the Deccan.

Aurangzeb died in 1707. It was a period of unrest, with various claimants playing the game of "Musical Chairs" around the powerful Mughal throne. Realizing their weakening hold over the Empire, the succeeding rulers loosened their hold over the Deccan, and bestowed on Mir Qamruddin the title of "Nizam," and "Asaf Jah." Nizam means "regulator" of the country and "Asaf Jah" means "equal to Asaf" a minister who was famed for his wisdom during the times of King Solomon. The Dynasty of Nizams of Hyderabad was known as the "Asaf Jah" dynasty.

Historians know Mir Qamruddin as Asaf Jah I and the first Nizam. Asaf Jah's sword, covered with gold and velvet, was straight as the man who carried it. It was the sword of justice. With it, he conquered, as it was essential in those days, but he also spared the vanquished with the generosity of a gallant victor. He won battles everywhere and the Marathas chieftains who had fought him, treated him with respect, both as a friend and a foe. He was an affectionate parent, and his attachment to his friends was both sincere and steady. In his last will, he stressed the need for his successors to follow a cautious budget policy to run the country, which if followed, would last the resources of his income for the next seven generations.

The seven generations, which Asaf Jah mentions in his will, had a great significance to him. The story goes that once, on the road from Delhi, he had paused on the wayside at the abode of a Muslim holy man who offered him food.

Asaf Jah was hungry. He ate four of the loaves of the bread, and felt embarrassed that he was depriving his good host of his bread. However, his host urged him to eat as much as he could. Asaf Jah ate seven loaves of bread and then he was full. His host urged him to eat more, but Asaf Jah had enough. The meal was over and his host turned to him and said: "Go now my son, may the blessings of Allah be upon you. Your dynasty will rule for seven generations."

After the death of the first Nizam, his successors though religious were not exactly a sentimental lot. As the soil was smoothed over Asaf Jah's grave, and the last prayers uttered, there arose five claimants to the throne. Of the five claimants, four were Asaf Jah's sons and the fifth was his grandson Muzaffar Jung from his favorite daughter.

On the chessboard of power politics were two outside forces, the French and the British who were competing with each other in Asaf Jah's lifetime for favorable trade concessions, for they knew that no profitable trade could be carried out without the active support of the Nizam in power. The First Nizam had favored the British by granting them exclusive trading rights, and the French were smarting for being left out, waiting for an opportunity to outwit the British to secure favorable trading rights from the Nizam. They seized this opportunity to jump into the fray, taking sides against the claimants who were favored by the British. From the power struggle that ensued Nizam Ali Khan, the third son of Asaf Jah emerged triumphant as the Second Nizam with British help, and the French bowed out of the scene.

The Second Nizam ruled from 1761 to 1803 and the British quickly recognized his ascendancy to the throne and offered the new ruler to station a body of British troops to help him settle his affairs in everything that was right and proper. The Second Nizam shifted his capital from Aurangabad to Hyderabad, which helped in the rapid growth and expansion of the city, resulting in its importance and prosperity. In 1768, constantly harassed by Marathas in the north of his kingdom, he signed a treaty with the British to maintain a subsidiary force of British troops and pay Rs 900,000 per annum towards their maintenance. The British who at that time were on hostile terms with Hyder Ali of Mysore compelled the Nizam to distance himself from Hyder Ali through another treaty, and come to their aid when it was required from him.

The next in the line of succession was Sikandar Jah. He became the Third Nizam and his rule lasted for twenty-six years. It was during his rule the important district of Berar, which fetched the Nizam annual revenue of five million rupees, was ceded to the British to finance the British contingent stationed in Hyderabad for the defense of the Nizam. After the death of Sikandar Shah, his son Nasir-ud-Daulah became the Fourth Nizam of Hyderabad in the year 1829. The new ruler protested the British hold over Berar. But, the British now firmly entrenched in Indian soil consolidated their hold over Berar and pressurized the Nizam to grant them a complete hold over Berar and signed a treaty of May 15 1853 to this effect. The fourth Nizam died in May 16 1857, and was succeeded by Asaf-ud-Daulah who became the Fifth Nizam.

By now, the British who had come to trade in India had established an empire. They had raised an army of Indian soldiers who broke into open revolt in the year 1857, which quickly engulfed the other parts of the country like a blazing fire, and the British did not know, which way to turn. But the Nizams of Hyderabad believed in honoring treaties to the latter. Disregarding the British role in the acquisition of Berar, the Nizam V quickly dispatched the State forces to help the beleaguered British forces and succeeded in suppressing the Mutiny from spreading to South India. The British acknowledged the favor of the Nizam by sending him a one hundred thousand rupees worth of English manufactured goods and with a note waiving the debt of five million rupees, which was "allegedly" owed to them by the Nizam. Nizam V died in 1869. His son Mahboob Ali Khan, a minor succeeded him to the throne as the Sixth Nizam. Berar continued to remain under British rule.

As the years rolled on, Mahboob Ali Khan grew up carefully groomed by the British Regent, and acquired a taste and fondness for all good things of the Victorian Age. He believed that money was there to spend. He was generous to a fault; his hospitality unbounded and he was popular with his subjects, Hindus and Muslims alike, and the British forces stationed in the Cantonment of Secundarabad.

It is related that one day he overheard from his noblemen that a certain Parsee Merchant in the city was not doing so well, and the day was not far when he would have to fold up his business. Trade was bad. A day or so later, the

Nizam paid an unexpected visit to the good merchant's shop who was dumbstruck at the sight of the Royal Carriage as it halted before his shop. The Nizam went inside the shop, without speaking a word, stood, and gazed around the shop. After completing his silent inspection, he ordered his assistants to buy all the articles in his shop for his palaces. To the merchant these words meant salvation. His business was saved. But, there was no indication that the purpose of Nizam's visit was charity for he firmly believed that charity demeans the person receiving it!

This happened to more than once to worthy men in need. On another occasion, Akbar Jung, had caught a servant red-handed stealing jewels worth Rs 100,000 from His Highness's bedroom in the early hours of the morning. The Nizam commended the police officer for his alertness and commanded that the erring servant be brought before him. This was immediately done. The Nizam looked at the jewels casually and said: "Unwittingly, you have arrested an innocent man. He did not have the courage to tell you that I had given him the jewels as a gift. The jewels are his!"

According to another incident, the Nizam received a visit from a Levantine Jew in 1898 whose name was Jacob. Jacob carried with him a splendid diamond of 182 ½ carats, which he wished to sell to the Nizam. The diamond was the size of a chicken egg with a flat bottom, too big to set on a ring. After inspecting the diamond, he put the diamond on a letter, which was lying on the desk near him. Instantly, the idea appealed to him. The diamond could be used as a paperweight! A deal was struck with Jacob and the diamond changed hands. The Nizam wrapped the costly jewel in

cloth, and slid the diamond into his writing table drawer and soon forgot all about it! It remained there for many years for no one knew where he had kept it!

The Nizam rarely left his domains. He frequently changed residences between three palaces - Chow Mahalla, Purani Haveli and Falaknuma - that were always kept in a state of readiness to receive him. Of the three, he usually stayed in Chow Mahalla, the ancestral home of the Asaf Jahs, which was decorated with the best furniture and carpets from all over the world. From these palaces, he would announce his intentions to go hunting. During these shooting trips, he would feed the poor by the thousands, often going to the kitchens to supervise the food being prepared for them, and would personally pour water into the cupped hands of their palms to drink!

Such an extravagant style of spending and doling out largesse would often result in a huge personal cash debt, which stood at millions of rupees and was constantly draining out the State Treasury. However, this debt was nothing compared to his vast ancestral wealth and millions of rupees in revenue, which poured into his personal account and State Treasury every year. His concern for the distressed in the 1908 floods was such that he opened his Palaces for the rehabilitation of the affected.

The Sixth Nizam died in a corner room at Falaknuma and was universally mourned. And, his son, Osman Ali Khan became the Seventh Nizam to ascend the throne. The year was 1911, the same year in which George V ascended the throne of England.

The Nizams of Hyderabad

Osman Ali Khan, the Seventh Nizam was known as a quiet, serious-minded, well-disciplined man with polite manners. From his mother Zahara Begum, he had developed a deep love for religion and clear-cut ideas on what was right and wrong, which formed the basis of his philosophy in life. As a young child, he learned to read and write Urdu, Arabic and Persian from the palace Maulvi (teacher) he received his religious instruction. His childhood was spent behind the high walls of his palace.

His father, the Nizam VI was very anxious that he should not be brought up as a spoilt child. It is reported that once as a prince, the young Osman took a liking to a multi-colored parrot that belonged to another boy in a village. The boy was not willing to part with his pet at any price. A rich landlord on the scene forced the boy to part with the parrot for a hundred-rupee note, which was enough to buy him several parrots. Osman got his parrot, but when his father heard the anguished wails of the child who was forced to part with his pet, he immediately ordered the parrot to be returned to its owner adding: "Let my son cry instead. He should grow up as any ordinary child." His

riches were to give Osman no immunity from human emotions. On another occasion, the Nizam VI expressed his displeasure, when young Osman dropped a gold coin from his hand and stooped to pick it up. "A bad sign," his father had said, "he might develop a love for money." And, where money was concerned, the child of the Nizam was not going to behave like any ordinary person.

At the turn of the century, Lord Curzon as the Viceroy of India paid an official visit to Hyderabad when he impressed upon the Nizam VI, the desirability of naming his successor. Osman Ali Khan, the only male heir, was declared heir-apparent, was placed in King Kothi Palace, and put in charge of Sir Brian Egerton to be groomed for succession to the throne. The sixteen-year old Osman was instructed in the art of riding, shooting, tent pegging and the art of wielding a sword, which he did with perfection. Like other teenagers of his time, he had his youthful phases, and developed extravagant tastes in clothing and luxury. This luxurious phase, however, disappeared with time. He married four times as Nizam and had many sons and daughters from his wives.

By tradition, from the days of Asaf Jah I, the Nizam was the undisputed ruler of Hyderabad. Only one person could match the Nizam in pomp and dignity and that was the Emperor at Delhi. Although, the Nizam ruled with the support of the British, but in reality, the power exercised by the Nizam was far greater than the King of England. He created his own noblemen with different ranks, which were bestowed on individuals in the state on merit and solemnly recorded in the "Jarida," the official gazette. He would hold Durbars, like his ancestors in the Durbar Hall

on special days of the year, which provided a magnificent display to all who came to witness its proceedings.

Wealth after a certain stage becomes redundant. The Seventh Nizam was wealthy beyond all imagination and his personal wealth was estimated to approximately three billion rupees along with exquisite priceless, jewels unmatched anywhere in the world. To every worthy cause in India, and sometimes elsewhere in the world he donated generously from his wealth. The Aligarh Muslim University, and the Benares Hindu University were some of the beneficiaries. He gave generously to the Allies during the First World War and thrice as much during the Second World War, which earned him the title of "Faithful Ally" from the King of England. He was the only Indian prince entitled to receive a twenty-one gun salute in any part of the British Empire, whereas, the others were rated to no more than nineteen.

As a concession to democracy, he surrounded himself with able administrators. The city of Hyderabad received under his administration, long asphalted roads, hospitals, universities, and for the first time the benefits of clean drinking water, sanitation and a sewage system. The Paigah Amirs were his trusted generals who maintained an army, which the Nizam could rely in the time of need and they were not allowed to leave their territories for even one hour without the express permission of the Nizam!

Falaknuma, the magnificent palace at the top of the hill was built by Vikhar-ul-Umrah a Paigah Amir in 1880's. Faced with bankruptcy, he had sold it to Nizam VI. This palace was reserved for receiving dignitaries from all over

the world. It was here that the Nizam had a shooting match with Archduke Ferdinand. A rupee coin was tossed into the air. The Archduke fired at it first and missed. When it was the Nizam's turn to fire, he hit the rupee! This was not difficult for one who was perhaps the finest shot in India at that time.

As the years continued to roll, the mood of abandon passed. The British were quitting India and a new regime was on the way. The Princes of India were now faced with the realization that they would be on their own. On July 17, 1947, Lord Listowel, the British Secretary of State gave them the choice of joining the dominions of India or Pakistan after partition or to stand alone, and declared that His Majesty's Government would not use the slightest pressure to influence their decision.

The Nizam was not sure whether his treaties and agreements his ancestors had entered into, with the British could be ended without his consent for he was a party to the Second Part of the contract. On July 9 1947, he wrote to Lord Mountbatten, the Last Viceroy of British India to clarify his stand. He carried out a lengthy correspondence with the Viceroy, which was meaningless and had only academic value. Lord Mountbatten had solved the bigger problem of partition between India and Pakistan and did not want to be saddled with the headache of resolving the problem of the State of Hyderabad. However, as Governor General of Free India he continued to assure the Nizam that the matter of the status of Hyderabad was under consideration with His Majesty's Government. On June 21, 1948, Lord Mountbatten departed from India in a blaze

of glory in his car, which drove him in State from the Viceroy's House to the airport.

However, the Nizam ruled over a large Hindu population who were in a majority in his state. Soon after India gained independence in 1947, all princely states were invited to join the Republic. The Nizam was in a dilemma. His religion made him a natural ally to Pakistan. He could not remain a neutral and rule over an independent state, without the help of the Indian Government. His trusted generals were men who were easily carried away by emotions, unable to give him a balanced judgment during the most crucial stage of negotiations with the Indian Government. They urged him to militarily defend his kingdom if war was forced on them and promised to support him with their lives and property.

Soon, the situation in Hyderabad became confusing to the Nizam, as new political forces had come on the scene. A hitherto long-dormant organization called Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen began to gather support, and its militant Muslim wing the Razakars, which advocated war with India, and led by Kasam Rizvi, became increasingly popular in Hyderabad among the Muslim population in the State. Overwhelmed by popular opinion, the Nizam was reluctant to merge his state with the Indian Union. In the meantime, the majority of Hindu population of the State of Hyderabad was also getting restive, and this led to an outbreak of violence and communal strife for the first time on a large scale in the State, which had been under the rule of the Nizams for more than two centuries.

On September 7, 1948, the Indian Government requested the Nizam to immediately disband the communal elements in the state and restore order. With the Nizam helpless to take command of the situation, a decision was taken to send Indian troops to restore peace in Hyderabad. On Monday, September 18, 1948, the Indian military forces marched into Hyderabad meeting little resistance on the way. The Indian Army called the military operation as "Operation Polo," and the Governor General of Free India C.Rajagopalachari named it as "Police Action," which lasted for 108 hours. The Army of Hyderabad surrendered and the State of Hyderabad was merged with the Indian Union. The princely era of the Nizams had ended.

Mir Osman Ali Khan, the last Nizam lived for another eighteen years and died on Friday February 24, 1967.

The Story Of Kohinoor Diamond

Since ancient times, the land of India has always been famous throughout the world for its diamonds, gems and jewels. The rulers of India vied with one another in collecting well-known jewels of great luster and brilliance. In fact, the number and the quality of jewels in a king's possession measured the greatness of a monarch. Presents from chieftains to the king, from kings to their queens and from one ruler to another invariably consisted of diamonds, diamond-studded ornaments, rubies and pearls. There are records of several precious stones of unusual brightness possessed by different monarchs in different periods of the history of India. They passed through one ruler to another either as presents or as war booty. Often they have made history and have left stories that live up to this time. And, to India belongs the proud privilege of having produced the priceless Kohinoor.

However, the origins of the Kohinoor diamond remain a mystery. According to legend, it had its origins in the ancient diamond mines found in Kolar, in Karnataka, India. Others believe it came from the diamond mines of Golconda, near Hyderabad. It is believed to have changed hands several times and possessed by various rulers in India. Its history starts with the arrival of Babur the Mughal

on the Indian scene. Babur had forayed earlier into India three times through the Khyber Pass.

During his fourth raid in 1523, he took possession of Lahore. Earlier, the reigning Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi, had ascended the throne of Delhi in the year 1517. The Lodhi Sultans before him had always treated their courtiers with respect. But, Ibrahim Lodi was distrustful and cruel with them. He would make them stand in his presence cross-armed, in a gesture of submission. He would have them locked up in dungeons at the slightest pretext, where they languished chained to the walls in their cells. It was hardly surprising, that the chief supporters of his regime, appealed to Babur for help.

Babur gladly agreed. On Thursday, 12 April 1526, the Mughal army reached Panipat and set up camp on a vast plain. He had twelve thousand men under his command. However, the forces of Ibrahim Lodi vastly outnumbered his forces and had a thousand elephants trained for combat. The two armies met on the battlefield at dawn on Friday, 20 April. In the attack that followed the Lodhi army was defeated decisively on the battlefield. Thousands of soldiers were killed on either side and among the dead was Ibrahim Lodi.

The head of the slain Lodi and his ally Bikramjit, the Maharaja of Gwalior, were brought to Babur. Soon after, it came to be known that the fort of Agra housed an immense treasure, which included a diamond whose size, color and brightness was beyond comparison. It was reported that the diamond was now in Agra fort with the family of the fallen Sultan who lived there along with the

relatives of Bikramjit. Babur dispatched his son Humayun with a contingent to seize Ibrahim Lodi's treasure. Humayun arrived at Agra on 10 May 1526 and took possession of the royal treasure along with it, the Kohinoor diamond.

When Babur arrived at Agra, Humayun handed him the diamond. According to his memoirs, Babur briefly examined the diamond in his hands and gave it back to Humayun. He writes that his appraisers in his army estimated its value at two-and-half days food for the entire world population and its weight as eight misqals (188 carats). After the occupation of Agra, Babur distributed the Lodi treasure amongst his men, each receiving what was due to his rank.

As a reward for his courage at the Battle of Panipat, Humayun received great wealth in addition to the famous Lodi diamond taken possession by him in Agra. Babur scorned material things and it appears that he kept nothing for himself. Babur ruled for less than four years and died on December 26, 1530 after a brief illness. Humayun succeeded him to the throne. From the time, when this unique diamond came into the possession of Humayun it emerged out of obscurity and has been in the limelight ever since. Humayun was very fond of his invaluable possession and never parted with it, even in his darkest days.

The well-known historian Abu Fazal in his 'Akbarname' relates an interesting story. He writes about the attempts made by others to make him part with it. Sher Shah Suri who had established a strong kingdom decided to oust

Humayun from power in Northern India. Humayun suffered two crushing defeat at his hands, first at Chausa in 1539 and then at Kanauj in the summer of 1540. Hounded as a fugitive, he fled to Lahore with the army of Sher Shah in hot pursuit. Denied of all help and protection, the small group accompanying him wandered across Sindh and Rajasthan with Humayun hoping to find a safe haven for himself and his family.

Fearing Sher Shah's wrath, the Governor of Sindh and the ruler of Jodhpur Rao Maldeo deluded Humayun with vague promises of help. In the meantime, Rao Maldeo tried by ruse to obtain the Lodhi diamond in his possession. Taking advantage of his miserable plight, the ruler of Jodhpur offered to buy the priceless diamond from him. He sent one of his courtiers disguised as a diamond merchant. Received by the Mughal, the merchant pretended sympathy with Humayun and offered to buy the diamond from him at any price. Humayun was enraged. Controlling his emotions, he had replied, "Such a jewel cannot be purchased. It is acquired by the arbitration of the flashing sword, or through the generosity of great monarchs." He dismissed the impostor, mounted his horse and gave signal to his family that the time had now come for them to depart from Jodhpur.

Finally, the Sultan of Sindh offered to supply Humayun with ships, money, and provisions provided he left his lands. Humayun accepted the offer and decided to head for Persia. After enduring much hardship, Humayun reached Persia with a few of his followers. The Shah of Persia received him cordially and extended him his hospitality that would

last for the next fourteen years. Humayun as a token of his gratitude presented him with his most treasured possession the famous Lodhi diamond. The Shah was very much pleased with the present, but appeared to have taken no fancy to it, and had it deposited in his treasury, where it remained for a long time. Humayun left Persia in the year 1544, and with the help of the Persian army managed to re-conquer India. He had forfeited his gem of fortune. It was to elude his dynasty for the next two generations.

In 1547, three years after Humayun's departure, the diamond left Persia for the Deccan. The rulers of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda were Shias. Therefore, they regarded the Shah of Persia as a religious head and an ally in times of need. They maintained close and cordial relations with the ruler of Persia. Ambassadors and presents were constantly exchanged between them. The transfer of the diamond to India is also confirmed by Khor Shah, the ambassador of the King of Golconda in the Persian court, in a manuscript that has been preserved in the Indian Office Library in London. Agha Islam, known also as Mahtar Jamal, carried the diamond with him as a present to Burhan Nizam Shah, the ruler of Deccan along with other jewels. After arriving at Ahmadnagar, he delivered the letter of Shah, but sold the diamond in Vijaynagar and kept the proceeds for himself.

From then onwards, all traces of the diamond were lost in a maze of conjectures for more than a century. Shah Jahan had begun his reign in Delhi. In Persia, a boy of modest origins went about his daily chores in the city of Ispahan. Both of them did not know at that time that the

Kohinoor diamond would one day unite their destinies. Having born in the year 1591 in Ispahan, Muhammad Saeed was fated to become an oil merchant after his father. But, the young boy had other ideas. He secured for himself a good education and entered the services of a diamond merchant who traded Persian steeds for Golconda diamonds in India. At that time, many Persian flocked to the Mughal courts in North India and the Bahmani Kingdom in the south in search of fame and fortune. The kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, and Golconda had become independent and followed Shiite Islam.

By the year 1630, Muhammad Saeed, who later came to be known as Mir Jumla, was living in Golconda. He was thirty-nine years old. Apprenticed to a jeweler in Golconda, he acquired an uncommon knowledge about diamond and diamond mines. A few years later, he was farming diamond mines in his own name. However, Mir Jumla was a man of parts. He possessed wonderful talents for both civil and military administration. His talents won him recognition in the Golconda court. Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah who ruled Golconda, impressed by his attainments soon made him Prime Minister.

Mir Jumla acquitted himself creditably in his new post and took the state in rapid strides towards progress. Not unnaturally, Mir Jumla's growing prosperity, position and riches excited the envy of other courtiers. They plotted against him with the Sultan. The Sultan aroused to jealousy and anger summoned him to Hyderabad, where he intended to have him poisoned or blinded. The plot was reported to Mir Jumla and before it could mature, he was out of the

Sultan's reach. Later on, the Sultan gave orders that Mir Jumla's vast lands and valuable property be confiscated.

From that moment, Mir Jumla began looking for new allies. He entered into secret negotiations with the Mughal Prince Aurangzeb who was then the Viceroy of the Deccan. Aurangzeb had heard a lot about Mir Jumla, although they had never met. His agents had suggested the advantages that could be gained over Golconda by having Mir Jumla on their side. He promised Mir Jumla and his family protection from the Mughal court and special favors should he desire to enter the service of Emperor Shah Jahan. Mir Jumla accepted Aurangzeb's offer and wrote to him seeking his protection.

On February 7, 1656, Aurangzeb laid siege to Golconda as a part of his plan to bring the kingdom into the fold of the Mughal Empire. The siege would last until March 30 1656. During the siege the army of Mir Jumla sided with the Mughals. The victory over Golconda was complete. It became a part of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb left Golconda on April 15, 1656 in the company of Mir Jumla. Mir Jumla parted ways with Aurangzeb at Nander and headed for Delhi to present himself before Emperor Shah Jahan. He carried with him magnificent presents for the Emperor. Among the presents were two hundred elephants, a thousand pieces of gold, and an unimaginable quantity of gems and precious stones. On meeting the emperor, he presented Shah Jahan with the celebrated diamond, which had no parallel in beauty and size. The diamond that had been won by Babur was back in Mughal hands. Shah Jahan in turn, heaped honor and rewards on Mir Jumla and was

made the Grand Vizier, and promoted to the rank of heading six thousand horsemen in the Mughal Army.

Shah Jahan had the historic diamond consigned to the Royal Treasury. After the death of Shah Jahan, it passed into the hands of Aurangzeb who succeeded him to the throne. Unlike his father, Aurangzeb was not fond of pomp and show; so this diamond remained in the Mughal Treasury for the major period of the time. Aurangzeb's death marked the beginning of the end of the Mughal Empire. None of his successors could match his stature as an Emperor. They were weak and indolent kings who occupied the center stage for a short time only to fall into oblivion. The empire had been reduced by rebellions and revolts. Power belonged to a group of ministers who took advantage of the confusion around them to feather their own nests, politically and materially, at the expense of the people and the empire.

During this entire period the diamond never saw the light of the day. It remained under lock in the imperial treasury. On 22 September 1719, the inhabitants of Delhi woke up to the sound of the beating of drums, announcing the ascension of Muhammad Shah to the throne. He was the twelfth Mughal ruler, and in the twelve years since Aurangzeb's death. He was the sixth "emperor" to be crowned. The new ruler was barely seventeen years old. Muhammad Shah loved ease, pleasures and the joys of life. He cared little for the dangers within his court and to the Empire. Handing over rule to his advisors before being compelled to do so, he retired himself in the palace to pursue the pleasures of wine and flesh. During his rule of

twenty-eight years, the Rajputs, Marathas, Jats and Sikhs rebelled against the Mughal rule and declared their independence.

While the Mughal Empire was sinking inexorably into a state of decadence, the fortunes of its rival Persia were ascending rapidly. Nadir Shah Afshar, a humble shepherd's son had succeeded in snatching the throne of Persia from the hands of Sultan Hussein, a pious, gentle, but hopelessly weak monarch of the long-ruling Safavid Dynasty and proclaimed himself as King of Persia. Consolidating his power in Persia, he entered Afghanistan to recover the former Persian city of Qandhar from the Afghans. After seizing Qandhar, Peshawar fell to him like a ripe fruit. Then it was the turn of Lahore. He had conquered earlier Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad. Soon, he was on his way to Delhi. A nominal battle was given to the invader in the plains of Karnal, fifty kilometers away from Delhi, by the Indian army, which ended up in its total defeat.

After capitulation of the Indian army, Nadir Shah entered Delhi in February 1739, and was conducted to the imperial palaces. He was struck by the grandeur of the Mughal Court and looked at every article in the palace with great curiosity. He was much pleased that Muhammad Shah fed and feasted the conquerors on a lavish scale. Nadir Shah expressed his intention of leaving the Mughal Empire to Muhammad Shah. The Mughal king thought he had escaped lightly but that was not to be. A few days later, the residents of Delhi killed a few Persian soldiers. This aroused the ire of Nadir Shah who ordered a general massacre by unsheathing his sword and the Persian soldiers began killing and looting indiscriminately. This went on

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During this entire period the diamond never saw the light of the day. It remained under lock in the imperial treasury. On 22 September 1719, the inhabitants of Delhi woke up to the sound of the beating of drums, announcing the ascension of Muhammad Shah to the throne. He was the twelfth Mughal ruler, and in the twelve years since Aurangzeb's death. He was the sixth "emperor" to be crowned. The new ruler was barely seventeen years old. Muhammad Shah loved ease, pleasures and the joys of life. He cared little for the dangers within his court and to the Empire. Handing over rule to his advisors before being compelled to do so, he retired himself in the palace to pursue the pleasures of wine and flesh. During his rule of

twenty-eight years, the Rajputs, Marathas, Jats and Sikhs rebelled against the Mughal rule and declared their independence.

While the Mughal Empire was sinking inexorably into a state of decadence, the fortunes of its rival Persia were ascending rapidly. Nadir Shah Afshar, a humble shepherd's son had succeeded in snatching the throne of Persia from the hands of Sultan Hussein, a pious, gentle, but hopelessly weak monarch of the long-ruling Safavid Dynasty and proclaimed himself as King of Persia. Consolidating his power in Persia, he entered Afghanistan to recover the former Persian city of Qandhar from the Afghans. After seizing Qandhar, Peshawar fell to him like a ripe fruit. Then it was the turn of Lahore. He had conquered earlier Ghazni, Kabul and Jalalabad. Soon, he was on his way to Delhi. A nominal battle was given to the invader in the plains of Karanal, fifty kilometers away from Delhi, by the Indian army, which ended up in its total defeat.

After capitulation of the Indian army, Nadir Shah entered Delhi in February 1739, and was conducted to the imperial palaces. He was struck by the grandeur of the Mughal Court and looked at every article in the palace with great curiosity. He was much pleased that Muhammad Shah fed and feasted the conquerors on a lavish scale. Nadir Shah expressed his intention of leaving the Mughal Empire to Muhammad Shah. The Mughal king thought he had escaped lightly but that was not to be. A few days later, the residents of Delhi killed a few Persian soldiers. This aroused the ire of Nadir Shah who ordered a general massacre by unsheathing his sword and the Persian soldiers began killing and looting indiscriminately. This went on

for nine hours at the end of which one hundred and fifty thousand people lost their lives. The streets of Delhi were awash with blood. Muhammad Shah pleaded desperately for his ill-fated subjects. Granting his prayers, Nadir Shah sheathed his sword and the slaughter ceased.

Overwhelmed with gratitude, Muhammad Shah presented to him all the jewels in the Royal Treasury. But, Nadir Shah demanded more to be given to him. He ordered the treasury to be emptied of all its gold, riches and countless objects of great value. The famous Peacock Throne, the pride of the Mughal emperors was taken away as war booty along with all the elephants, horses, and camels in the royal stables. But, the famous diamond was nowhere to be seen. Muhammad Shah carried it with him hidden inside the folds of his turban that he wore on his head. The secret was known only to a select few including the Eunuch in the Harem of the Emperor. Hoping to win the favor of Nadir Shah, the disloyal eunuch whispered the closely guarded secret of Muhammad Shah, in the ears of the former. Nadir Shah soon devised a plan to deprive the unfortunate monarch of India of his prized possession.

The month of April 1739 was drawing to a close. Nadir decided to return to Persia before the heat became unbearable. On 1 May, he held a grand durbar, where he formally handed the control of the Mughal Empire to Muhammad Shah. It was during this gathering he reminded his counterpart of the ancient tradition of exchanging turbans as a sign of friendship and fraternal ties. Nadir Shah gave little room for pause between word and action. Muhammad Shah had no choice but to comply carried through this gesture with such poise that Nadir was baffled. His

composed behavior left Nadir bewildered. Was the diamond really hidden under the folds of the turban, as the eunuch had revealed, or was it a hoax?

With a wave of his hand, he let it be known that the grand durbar was over. Then, he hurried into his apartments and once there, eagerly undid the turban and to his delight found the diamond hidden within its folds. Wonderstruck at its size, beauty, and brilliance of the stone, he exclaimed: "Kohinoor," which in Persian means "mountain of light." And, so this gem of fortune came to be known by this name, thereafter. After staying in Delhi for fifty-nine days, the conqueror departed for Persia on 5 May 1739. And, for the second time in history, Kohinoor went out of India. Arriving in Khurasan, he had all his treasures with the exception of Kohinoor taken to Kalat, his mountain den situated north of Mashad. As for the diamond, he kept it near himself, within easy reach.

Nadir Shah did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his fabulous loot from India. He was cruel, heartless, and ruled with an iron hand. His rule became unbearable to a section of the Persian nobility and they resolved to get rid of him. On June 19, 1747 a group of assassins tasked with killing Nadir Shah entered his tent in the camp he had set up near the city of Qutchan and killed him. The Kohinoor diamond fell into the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali, a distinguished general of Nadir Shah. One hour later, breaking through the Persian army, he was on the road to Qandhar along with the other Afghan troops in the employ of Nadir Shah. He captured the cities of Herat and Qandhar. From there, he marched towards Kabul, which fell easily and without

much resistance and proclaimed himself the King of Afghanistan.

Ahmad Shah died of cancer on 23 October 1772, after appointing Timur the second of his four sons as his successor. The new owner of Kohinoor was intelligent, determined and active on the domestic front, not interested in furthering his kingdom like his father. He reigned for twenty years. He was not a man of pomp and ostentation, and never wore the Kohinoor. Thus, the diamond remained locked in the coffers of Bala Hissar (the citadels of Afghan cities) with the other jewels of the crown until his death in 20 May 1793. To add to the miseries of a crumbling kingdom, he left behind twenty-three sons to contest the throne of Kabul.

A battle for succession followed. Zaman Shah, the fifth son of Timur ascended the throne of Kabul. The first act of the new king was to put down the rebellion of his brother Mahmud and Humayun in Herat and Qandhar. The wavering fortunes of war toyed with the brothers, now favoring one and then smiling on the other. Zaman Shah became a victim of misfortune and was made prisoner by one of the local chiefs who wanted to enter into the good books of his brother Mahmud Shah. At the stroke of midnight he had Zaman Shah surrounded by two hundred soldiers. Zaman Shah was quickly caught and imprisoned. A courier was sent to Mahmud Shah announcing the news of his capture.

The next day the victim was taken under heavy escort to Kabul. However, Zaman Shah had managed to hide the Kohinoor with the help of his warder in a cavity in the

wall of his cell and his other jewels in a hole in the floor dug with the point of a dagger. The convoy was met at the gates of the city by Mahmud's henchmen. Zaman Shah was blinded and locked up by his brother in the Bala Hissar citadel, and tried in vain to extract the whereabouts of his jewels. The wretched man maintained, even under torture, that he had cast them in the river before reaching Kabul. Mahmud had no time to pursue the matter further for his reign was a period of conflict between various tribal chiefs jostling for power and influence. One group supported Shuja Mirza, Zaman Shah's younger brother as a claimant to the throne.

Small skirmishes followed. In July 1803, a pitched battle was fought. The armies of Mahmud Shah suffered a decisive defeat. Shuja Mirza made his entry into Kabul mounted on a splendid steed. He rode straight to Bala Hissar, where the gates were opened to the victor without any resistance. His first act as king was to liberate his elder brother Zaman Shah from his prison cell and to put in his place the vanquished Mahmud. Zaman Shah expressed his gratitude to his brother by revealing the hiding place of Kohinoor and presented him with all the jewels that he had buried on his cell.

In due course of time, Mahmud Shah escaped from his prison in Bala Hissar. He collected an army with him and marched again against his brother Shuja Mirza and managed to defeat him. Shuja Mirza fled into the mountains leaving all his jewels (except the Kohinoor) and luggage in the hands of his rival. For nine years after his defeat he made strenuous attempts to regain his throne. He was

finally overpowered in Akora and made prisoner by the Governor of Attock. However, before being captured, he had succeeded in sending his family to Punjab. His family on reaching Lahore placed themselves in the hands of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Wafa Begum his wife had carried the family jewels and the Kohinoor diamond with her to Lahore.

On hearing the dreadful news of her husband's capture, Wafa Begum became greatly distressed. She sent her trusted men to Ranjit Singh and implored him to use his influence to get her husband released. She promised to present him with the Kohinoor Diamond in return for his help. Accordingly Ranjit Singh undertook to obtain the Shah's release. He marched against the Afghans and managed to get Shah Shuja released. In March 1813, Shah Shuja arrived in Lahore, where he was received with great honor and dignity. Ranjit Singh lost no time in demanding the Kohinoor. After using a great deal of tact, persuasion, and threats Ranjit Singh managed to secure the Kohinoor. The Kohinoor was deposited for some time in the royal treasury. Later, Ranjit Singh ordered it to be brought out from the treasury and carried it with him wherever he went, under a strong guard. The Maharaja wore the Kohinoor on state occasions. After about five years, he had it fitted up in his turban. After another year, he had it studded in his armlet, where it remained for twenty years and when it was surrendered to the British.

After his death in July 18, 1839, his kingdom passed to his son Maharaja Kharak Singh, who was a weak man. Though well meaning, he had none of the qualities of his father. During his rule, the nobles of his court rose in revolt

and had him imprisoned and got his young son Naunihal Singh seated on the throne. Naunihal Singh was a promising lad with a personality of his own. He was brilliant, smart, and brave, but he also fell a victim to the intrigues in his court and was killed by a falling door in the year 1840. In January 1841, Sher Singh, the second son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh ascended the throne. The Kohinoor was presented to Maharaja Sher Singh during the time of his coronation. After his assassination, the Kohinoor came into the possession of his son, Maharaja Dalip Singh.

More intrigues and a period of instability followed. Battles and wars were fought within and outside the Sikh Kingdom. The first Anglo-Sikh war ended with an easy victory for the British on 10 February 1846. Finding further resistance useless, the Sikhs entered into negotiations with the British and under the terms, a huge amount of money had to be paid to the British as war reparations. Later on, hurt by the social, administrative and financial reforms imposed by the British a section of the Sikh army rallied together for a popular uprising resulting in the Second Anglo-Sikh War. At Gujarat, the last big battle was fought on 12 March 1849 resulting in a total defeat for the Sikh Army. On the 29 March Lord Dalhousie annexed Punjab into the British Empire. Under the terms of the treaty drawn on this occasion he demanded the gem and called Kohinoor to be surrendered by the Maharaja of Lahore to the Queen of England.

The Kohinoor was formally handed to the British Government of Punjab. The Governor General sent the Kohinoor to England after taking every care to ensure its

safe passage over the land and the sea-routes. On 6 April 1850 the Kohinoor left the shores of Asia on board of the HMS Medea. So shrouded in mystery was its departure that even the Captain of the Medea did not know the precious cargo his ship carried. On 3rd July, the Kohinoor was formally handed over to Queen Victoria by the officials of the East India Company in a private ceremony held in Buckingham Palace. The Kohinoor was removed from its mount, so that a replica could be made for the British Museum. Its weight as calculated by the Queen's jeweler was about 186 carats.

Queen Victoria after holding consultations with others in her Court decided that the brilliance of the diamond could be further enhanced if it were re-cut. They decided to call in specialists for advice. Among those who were called in, virtually ruled out refashioning the stone, as it would compromise on its size and incur in the process a considerable loss of weight. These reports were sent to Messrs. Garrard, the court jewelers, with the opinions of the experts. They believed that the opinion of the experts was well founded but the challenges in cutting the diamond could be overcome with care and skill. Garrard was given permission to cut the diamond so as to convert it into a brilliant oval shaped stone.

The work was carried on in London and lasted for 38 days. When completed it reduced the diamond from 186 to 106 carats. The results were most unfortunate. The diamond had lost 43% of its original weight. It deprived the historical stone of all its historical and mineralogical

value. By then, the harm had already been done. The Kohinoor, however, lost none of its original mystique.

The Queen had the Kohinoor mounted on a magnificent Royal Crown worn by the Queens of England, where it was set in the midst of two thousand small diamonds. Five years later, it was to adorn another one of her tiaras. In 1911, it was put in the crown of Queen Mary who wore it at the coronation of her husband, George V. Finally in 1937; the diamond was placed on the crown of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother of England. Today, the Kohinoor is kept with other precious objects of the British Crown in a round display case in the basement of the "Jewel House," of the Tower of London, far away from the intrigues, assassinations, battles, fratricidal wars and lust. It only casts its brilliance on the millions of tourists who are for the most part, unaware of its long history in shaping the destinies of men.

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Searchlight On Suez Canal

The Suez Canal as it is called today, links the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea by a waterway. It is perhaps, one of the oldest enterprises of the world, ever considered by man. The Pharaohs of the ancient times had recognized the advantages of such a waterway passing through Egypt. They believed the linking of the two seas would ensure a safe, speedy, and an economical means of transport for the vessels sailing through it. This waterway would also be of great commercial importance to Egypt.

Geographically, Egypt formed the natural gateway between the East and the West. The wealth and the produce of nations passed through her intercontinental trade routes. Since ancient times, merchants of the world had passed through Egypt selling their wares and exchanging goods from far-flung countries of the world. Traders from Europe constantly traveled to Egypt by sea. The possessor of Egypt also ruled the mart of the world. It was therefore natural that the empires of the world from the earliest times sought the conquest of Egypt through land and by sea for its strategic location and unique commercial position in the world.

To the east of Egypt was a narrow neck of land-the Isthmus of Suez-joining Africa with Asia. It was also noticed that the waters of the Red Sea flowed close to the Mediterranean Sea. Not so far to the West was the River Nile running in a parallel course to the sea with one of its channels crossing the edge of the Isthmus. As a result, the acute minds of the world four thousand years ago thought about the possibility of providing the Nile with an additional artificial mouth linking it to the Red Sea connected to the Mediterranean through its delta channel.

The earliest Egyptian canal builders were mainly concerned in expanding the highly profitable trade carried through the land routes, providing the merchants also a passage through shipping vessels to carry their trade to the great interior cities along the Nile River, enriching the country with gold, ivory and spices brought from the Arabian Gulf and the East African coast.

The details of the construction of the first navigable canal, linking the Nile with the Red Sea have been lost in antiquity. Tradition records that it was Sesostris, a Pharaoh of the Twelfth Dynasty who first set his hand to the work. During the next thousand years, the canal was available for commerce and it was known then as the Canal of the Pharaohs. Political upheavals in Egypt caused the maintenance of the canal to be abandoned in the beginning of the 7th century BC.

Later, the famous Pharaoh Necho (612 BC) took upon the task of cutting the canal employing 120,000 slaves on the labor. But he was persuaded to dump the project midway by his court astrologers who warned that he was

preparing the way for an invader from foreign lands to occupy Egypt. It is believed that this prophecy came true after Darius (521 BC) conquered Egypt after the death of Cambyses II. He restored and enlarged the canal. A record of his achievement discovered recently states: "I ordered the canal to be dug up from the River called Pirava (the Nile), which follows in Egypt to the sea that comes out of Persia (The Red Sea)." Subsequently Darius for reasons unknown destroyed the last part of the canal, which was later restored by his successor Xerxes.

Under the Ptolemaic Dynasty the Canal of the Pharaohs was enlarged ending in a place called Arsinoe near the modern Suez Port. Ptolemy Philadelphius (286 BC) proposed cutting a canal directly through the Isthmus, joining the two seas together. He was made to abandon his project for it was believed that the level of the Red Sea was higher than that of the Mediterranean, and this in turn would cause the flooding of the entire country if the canal was built—a belief that persisted until the beginning of the nineteenth century. If it had not been for this error in calculating the level of the two seas, a canal would have come into being two thousand years ago!

During the Roman occupation of Egypt, the Canal of the Pharaohs was renamed as the River of Trajan. The Emperor Trajan who ruled Egypt from 98 CE to 117 CE devoted much of his attention in construction and improvement of harbors. He got the old canal cleaned and gave it a better water supply by uniting it with the main stream of Nile near Cairo. As it was constructed then, the canal took the shape of an arc and remained navigable

until some time in the 3rd century CE. By the time Emperor Constantine (285 CE) took over the reign of the Roman Empire the canal had been again put out of commission.

With the Arab conquest of Egypt in the 7th century CE, the Nile-Red Sea Canal entered the last phase of its history. After taking permission of Caliph Umar (r.a), Amr ibn al-Aas, the Governor of Egypt had the canal reopened in the winter of 641-642 CE. The canal rendered useful service to the people of Egypt until the end of the 8th century under the name "Canal of the Commander of the Faithful." During his rule as Governor of Egypt, it was proposed to Amr ibn al-Aas (r.a) of cutting a canal from Lake Tismah in the middle of the Isthmus to the Mediterranean Sea. But the project was dropped due to military reasons. The canal was closed in 776 CE by Caliph Abu Jafar al-Mansour to check the revolt against his empire from the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah.

From this time onwards, the commerce between Egypt and the rest of the world steadily declined. Turkey had gained complete mastery over the shipping in the Mediterranean Sea. The traffic of European merchants sailing to Middle Eastern countries in the Mediterranean had almost come to a complete halt. During this period the Arab traders had introduced spices into Europe. Realizing they controlled commodities that were in great demand in Europe, the Arab traders kept their sources of supply a secret and made up fantastic tales about the dangers involved in obtaining the spices.

In bits and pieces, the Europeans learnt about the Land of India in the East, famous for its riches and spices. A

new route from the sea had to be discovered in the face of the Turkish barrier. The vast wealth of the Venetians arising from acting as middlemen in the spice trade with India had earned them the envy of all European nations. Portuguese sailors, encouraged by Prince Henry, the Navigator had explored most of the west coast of Africa in the early 15th century. Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain in 1492 and headed west hoping to hit the Indian coast where the precious commodities could be found. Another famous voyager, Vasco da Gama traveled from Portugal and succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope and reached India in May 1498. He brought back a letter from Zamorin to the King of Portugal that the ruler of Calicut was willing to barter spices for gold, silver and scarlet cloth.

At last, the sea route to India had been discovered, which gave the Europeans a complete monopoly of the spice trade to India and the countries of the Far East for the next four hundred years. The people of Venice took hard the loss of their spice trade to other European powers of those times. As early as 1504, they had thought about the possibility of suggesting to the Sultan of Egypt the possibility of cutting a canal through Egypt joining sea to sea.

At the end of the 16th century, the then Turkish Pasha of Egypt Al-Hajj Ali suggested to the Sultan of Turkey the reopening of the Nile-Red Sea Canal with access to the Mediterranean, across the Isthmus, which would facilitate the transport of materials across the waterway by the Turkish fleet. The Sultan was greatly fascinated by this project but was deterred in sanctioning it owing to the difficulties in carrying it out, and the heavy cost involved.

By then the French had taken a keen interest in getting a canal cut from Suez to Cairo as it would lessen the cost of goods imported from India through ships and weaken the hold of Spaniards over the Mediterranean Sea.

However, the political difficulties, apart from the practical ones, in conquering Egypt appeared formidable. Leibnitz, a German philosopher urged Louis XIV to seize Egypt and secure for the nation of France the riches of eastern traffic. Jacques Savary, a 17th century French trader in his book "The Complete Merchant" advised the French Government about the advantages that would accrue to France by cutting a canal through the Isthmus. He writes: "Britain would loose her position as the mistress of the seas and her commerce through the Cape of Good Hope would be destroyed leaving France in control of the safest and speediest trade route to India and Far-East." The plan of constructing such a canal was debated endlessly by the merchants of France.

In the meantime, Turkey continued to control Egypt and was content in letting the goods shipped from India to Suez to be carried by camels to Cairo, then conveyed by canal to Alexandria and finally transshipped to Europe. It was also evident to the Government of France that the power of Turkey over Egypt was weakening. And, it was only a matter of time, to replace the rulers of Egypt by the ones more willing to make the construction of Suez Canal a reality. For the moment, France satisfied itself in negotiating passage rights for her merchants with the Beys who ruled Egypt at that time.

On the other hand the British traders were more aware of the designs of France long before the British Government took notice of it. George Baldwin of the British Levant Company warned England: "France in possession of Egypt would possess the master-key to all the trading stations of the earth. Enlightened in navigation and commerce, she might make it the emporium of the world...transporting her forces...in any manner and at any time; England would hold her possessions in India at the mercy of France." Colonel James Capper of the East India Company writing in his book in 1785, warned England in depending on a single trade route, which at some point in time may be superseded by the discovery of a better one.

So matters stood at the beginning of the last decade of the 18th century. War broke out between England and France in 1793. Four years later, Napoleon Bonaparte felt that in order to destroy England, it was necessary for him to possess Egypt. Soon, Napoleon landed his forces in Alexandria and occupied Egypt, a move that took England completely by surprise. He lost no time in undertaking the task of cutting a canal through the Isthmus, which was the primary object of his expedition.

For this purpose, he hired the services of a number of engineers and scientists. A survey was instituted and carried out, headed by the famous engineer J.M Lepere. Lepere estimated that it would cost France 1,500,000 pounds and would occupy ten thousand workmen four years to do the job. But, the fortunes of war soon turned against Napoleon and the peace of Amiens in 1802 ended the French territorial ambitions in Egypt. But, France never lost interest in Egypt or the Suez Canal Project.

By the beginning of the 19th century, Muhammad Ali Pasha managed to seize power in Egypt and proclaimed himself Viceroy. He introduced sweeping administrative and military reforms in Egypt. Most of his efforts were directed in improving Egypt's infrastructure such as canals and roadways. He commissioned a number of engineers to work on the task of cutting a direct and an indirect canal through Egypt that would link the two seas together. In 1819, a new canal known as the Mahmudiya Canal (named after the Sultan of Turkey) was dug. It linked Alexandria with Nile. Muhammad Ali Pasha died in 1849 without making his dream of constructing a canal, joining the two seas a reality.

It was finally left to the genius of Ferdinand de Lesseps, a former attaché of the French Consul in Alexandria to bring about the successful completion of the canal in the year 1869. Lesseps had earned for himself the reputation of a humanist with a world outlook. His intentions behind constructing the canal had nothing to do with the power politics in his time. And, he desired to give the nations of the world a speedy means of transit that would unite the countries of the West with those of the East, and enrich them in trade.

Born at Versailles in 1805, Lesseps came from a family of diplomats. Earlier his father had been posted as the French Consul in Egypt and has assisted Muhammad Ali Pasha in his rise to power. Ferdinand was destined for a family career. After holding various diplomatic posts overseas, Lesseps returned for a second time to Egypt. While waiting to land from his vessel at Alexandria, he

came across a copy of Lepere's memorandum on the proposed Suez Canal. His imagination was fired by this grand concept, for he had never forgotten his youthful vision of a cutting a canal through Egypt that would link the two seas on either side of the Isthmus.

After landing in Egypt, Lesseps struck a lasting friendship with Muhammad Saeed Pasha, the youngest son of Muhammad Ali. Lesseps devoted himself to the task of studying every aspect of Lepere's proposed project of the Suez Canal. Two years later Abbas Pasha who was the Viceroy of Egypt died and his friend Muhammad Saeed replaced him as the ruler of Egypt. Lesseps was now ready with all the details and the principal facts of the Suez Project. At the earliest opportunity, he explained to Muhammad Saeed his vision of constructing the Suez Canal without entering into details, dwelling mainly on the main points written in a memorandum, which he had carried with him.

Muhammad Saeed listened with keen interest to what Lesseps had to say. He was a man of considerable intelligence, and raised few objections that were immediately explained to him by Lesseps. In the end he was convinced. He said to the Frenchman: "I accept your plan; we will concern ourselves...as to means of carrying it out. You may regard the matter as settled, and place your trust in me." Lesseps had won the Concession from the Prince in a day over what Governments had been haggling for decades. The Concession was drawn on broad lines in November 1854. By it, Lesseps was authorized to form an international company under his own direction,

the "Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez." The Concession would be in force for 99 years from the date of opening of the Canal and had to be ratified by the Sultan of Turkey.

The news of the Concession came as a bombshell when a public announcement was made on the making of the Suez Canal. France and Austria were naturally pleased, but England expressed her misgivings through the British Consul General in Egypt. Her Majesty's Government regarded this scheme with disfavor. Lesseps was quick to realize that he had to contend with the full force of the British opposition to his venture. He, therefore, hastened to Constantinople to secure the support of Sultan of Turkey before the opposition took on a concrete form.

On reaching Constantinople, Lesseps found to his dismay that all his efforts in seeking the Sultan's ratification for his project were being thwarted by Lord Redcliffe, the British Ambassador who was using his influence with the Sultan and the Grand Vizier to withhold their assent. He knew he had to take England into his confidence if he wanted his project to be successful. Lesseps, therefore, decided to travel to London. Arriving in London in June 1855, he first called upon Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister of England to apprise him about the project. The Prime Minister made it clear that he was opposed to the venture, as it would harm British maritime and commercial interests, and would give France an advantage over the sea routes.

Lesseps decided to talk directly to the British merchants and ship owners having business with India of the enormous financial advantages of his project. The British traders were

quick to realize the feasibility of his project. Pleased at the receptive audience, Lesseps decided to push ahead on his advantage by setting up an international committee of the best engineering brains in Europe to convince his opponents on the advantages of the Suez Canal project. The committee submitted its report in January 1856. The report stated; "Our investigation has revealed to us...the execution of the work on the Canal is easy and its success assured."

Another move was necessary. Lesseps decided to sell the shares of his company in the open market. France purchased half of its shares, and some of it was sold to others in European countries. Armed with the initial capital, Lesseps decided to push ahead with the digging of the Canal without waiting for approval from Turkey. Alarmed at this move, the British Government tried every kind of intimidation to make him abandon his work. Lesseps soon realized that he could not succeed on the Canal single-handedly. His funds were running out. In desperation, he appealed to Napoleon III, the Emperor of France for help. The Emperor assured him all financial assistance and protection.

Operations were resumed, and by October 18th 1862, the waters of the Mediterranean entered Lake Tismah, an achievement that impressed even the British observers. The canal had been cut through a waterless region of sandy waste and it provided drinking water to thousands of workmen engaged in the task of building the canal. Nonetheless, the British continued to oppose the project along with the Sultan of Turkey. On January 18th 1863, his friend and patron Muhammad Said died and his successor Ismail ranged himself boldly on the side of the

enterprise. Faced with opposition, Lesseps again appealed to the Emperor of France to arbitrate on the behalf of the company. After complicated negotiations, a deal was reached that was acceptable to all parties.

On March 16th 1866, the Sultan of Turkey gave his sanction to continue work on the Suez Canal. Released from the crushing weight of governmental opposition the construction of the canal proceeded swiftly. Machinery and dredgers were brought to replace the heavy labor loss. The excavations continued southward from Lake Tismah and northward from Suez until the waters of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea were united in Bitter Lakes in the summer of 1869. The Suez Canal that was built was about 104 miles long, with minimum bottom width of 150 feet, and has a depth of 33 ft.

The official opening of the Suez canal took place on November 17th 1869 attended by many royal dignitaries and distinguished persons. Praise for its achievement poured from different parts of the world. The Suez Canal was now seen as universal in its benefits. A procession of sixty-seven vessels, headed by the Imperial yacht Aigle with Empress Eugene and De Lesseps on board filed into the Canal at Port Saeed and, after nights at anchor in Lake Tismah and the Bitter Lakes, the Suez was reached at 11 o'clock in the morning of November 20th. Thus, the great hopes, which were entertained by De Lesseps, of this mighty undertaking were realized. His patience, perseverance and unwavering faith in this project had paid off. He had successfully surmounted all difficulties and crises that were thrown in his way. At last, the centuries old dream of joining the two seas together had become a reality.

Biography

The Aristotle of the East

In the Middle Ages, a Muslim was described as a fierce man, always flourishing his bloodstained sword ever ready to kill any Christian that stood in his way. In fact, it was a picture encouraged by the Crusaders, and some Church leaders who would tell any story to damage the reputation of the Muslims in those days. But, it was a long way from the truth. Today, modern day historians of the West are forced to admit the fact that most of the Arabs during the Middle Ages were far more civilized, humane, and cultured than the Christians of the West. This fact was clear more than anywhere in the world in the City of Qurtuba (Cordoba) of Muslim Spain in the twelfth century. It was here that in the year 1126, was born a man who would go down in the history of the world, as one of the most brilliant thinkers of his age. His fame was such, it spread beyond the boundaries of the Muslim world, and gained him recognition throughout the entire Christian world. This man was known by the name Abu'l Walid Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Rushd. The Christians of the West, who found it difficult to pronounce the Arab names into words, changed it into Latin. For them, he was known simply as Averroes.

Ibn Rushd was a man of many parts. Today, it would be very difficult for a man to be a famous doctor, a successful lawyer, and a renowned philosopher; also, a gifted astronomer and an outstanding theologian at the same time. Ibn Rushd was all these, and much more. He had an unquenchable thirst for seeking knowledge, which was unmatched by any other Muslim scholar known during his time. He was born into a distinguished family. His father was the Chief Magistrate in the City of Qurtuba, and was famous throughout the city as an excellent teacher of law. His father naturally inspired the young Ibn Rushd, and when he grew up, he became a lawyer. However, he was not content on just being a lawyer. He wanted to learn much more, and on his own account he vigorously pursued the study of medicine. He soon became a practicing physician, treating all those who came to him with their ailments. He also taught others who came to him seeking knowledge, and above all he would write late into the night, putting his thoughts and experiences on paper, he authored outstanding books on law, general medicine - with notes on the different types of ailments of the eyes and fever that were treated by him - and his thoughts on the subject of astronomy.

The only person who matched him in his interests and writings in the ancient past was the great philosopher Aristotle. However, with the passage of time, the other achievements of Ibn Rushd were almost forgotten from the memory of his own people, and the world remembered him more as a scholar who wrote a brilliant commentary on Aristotle. In his work on Aristotle, he tried to find out

whether the religious beliefs of Muslims could be reconciled with the reasoning and thinking of the ancient Greek philosophers, and at the end of his work he sketched out some interesting conclusions.

For the ordinary Muslims, the Religion of Islam in many ways was a very simple religion, and its Sacred Book the Holy Qur'an dealt with a way of life and belief, which was the Revealed Word of God a Muslim had to follow in his daily life in order to remain within the fold of Islam. On the other hand, Aristotle was also known as a religious man of his times, but was more famous as a philosopher. Ibn Rushd who had studied the works of Aristotle in detail wanted to experiment whether it was possible to link the Revealed Word of God and the human way of thinking. Aristotle believed that it was possible to learn everything, and gain all knowledge by a deep study of material things in this world. He also believed that perfection in knowledge could be achieved through these means, and be recognized in purely human terms.

However, the formal religious teachers of Islam during the time of Ibn Rushd believed that the Religion of Islam taught that the Truth can only be revealed directly from God, and that perfection of knowledge that the Greek scholars tried to strive for in their study of the material world could not be achieved by human beings, and it was an attribute that belonged to Allah, the God of all Universe and Mankind.

In his commentary on Aristotle, Ibn Rushd tried to strike a middle path trying to reconcile reason and the religious

thought of Islam by following the middle path. He believed that all human beings could be divided into three classes who must be taught matters of religion according to what they were capable of understanding. In the first class, were the ordinary, unlearned men who were completely satisfied by simply being told what they should believe by those who were more learned than them in matters of religion, and for these people the bare words of the Holy Qur'an were enough, and no discussion was necessary to convince them on the finer points of Religion of Islam. The second class of men were those who were satisfied with arguments that were presented to them in a fairly persuasive manner to be convinced on all matters relating to religion. However, in the third category of human beings were people who rated themselves among the very intelligent men who liked to have everything proved to them beyond all shadow of doubt. These people, said Ibn Rushd, were those who had to be prepared in such a way, to discover that although reason and matters relating to Revelation did not on the face of it lead to the same conclusions, they would ultimately agree with one another, if pursued by a deeper study, reflection and thought. The Revelations of God in the Holy Qur'an did not always give man the ability to understand the nature of the Divine Order, and the Supreme Plan of the Creator of the entire Universe. And, when there was conflict, between human reasoning and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of Prophet Muhammad, then the Revealed Word of Allah, and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad should be accepted over the words of the philosopher Aristotle who was a mere mortal. So

the intelligent man had to accept the Word of God, even though, his questioning mind of the Divine Order would not always be satisfied in this world!

The conflict between reasoning of the Philosopher Aristotle and the Revealed Truths of the Holy Qur'an occupied the mind of Ibn Rushd throughout his entire life.

However, his greatest achievement was not so much that he solved the problem between the words of human reasoning and the Word of God - for he did not do that - but that in trying to solve it, he produced a brilliant Arabic translation of all the works of Aristotle - with his personal commentaries - that surpassed even the work of what the ancient Greek philosopher managed to achieve in his lifetime!

Ibn Rushd was a man who was far ahead of his times. The Muslims of Spain, however, found it difficult to understand his writings and accused him of following deviant thoughts and had him exiled from Spain. However, the ban on his return was shortly lifted before he died in Morocco in the year 1198 CE. Although, the Christian world considered him as an infidel - like all other Muslims - his reputation and fame in the literary circles of Western Thought was so great that his works were widely read and debated in the greatest universities of Europe for centuries after him!

The Nightingale of a Thousand Songs

Shaikh Muslihuddin Saadi, the celebrated Persian poet was born at Shiraz in Persia, at the end of the twelfth century of the Common Era. His father Abdullah is believed to have held a minor post in the Court of the Atabak ruler of Fars by name Saad bin Zangi (1195-1226 CE). The ruler greatly respected Saadi, held him in high esteem and counted him among the great nobles of his court. In response, Saadi took his poetical nom de plume from the name of the prince.

Saadi commenced his studies in Shiraz, and later completed his studies from a college in Baghdad. While studying in college, he was fortunate to obtain financial assistance from a rich nobleman of Baghdad on being informed about his want of means to complete his studies. His professors who recognized his talents also helped him gain a fellowship in the college. After completing his studies, Saadi immersed himself in the study of Islamic theology that ended with a pilgrimage to Makkah, an act, which he was going to repeat fourteen times in his life traveling chiefly on foot. In due course of time, his religious temperament

and outlook of life earned for him a title of "Shaikh" (a man of dignity and position) by people known to him.

For many years, he devoted his life largely to travel. Writing about his fondness for traveling to different lands he says: "I have wandered to different regions of the world, and everywhere I have mixed freely with the inhabitants. I have gathered something from each corner and I have gleaned an ear from every harvest." He is known to have traveled through the lands of Asia Minor, Barbary, Abyssinia, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Armenia, Arabia, the various provinces of Iran, and different parts of India. His extensive travels to the far away lands of the world were an extraordinary achievement in those days.

An anecdote related by Saadi reveals the next important event of his life. He writes: "Weary of the society of my friends at Damascus, I fled to the barren wastes of the Land of Palestine, until I was made captive of the Franks (the Crusaders) and was forced to dig clay along with the Jews in the fortifications of Tripoli. One of the nobles of Aleppo, who was my friend, happened to pass that way and recognized me. He took compassion on my unhappy condition, ransomed me from the Franks for ten dinars, and took me with him to Aleppo. He married me to his daughter and presented me with a gift of one hundred dinars. After sometime, my wife unveiled her disposition, which was ill tempered, quarrelsome, obstinate and abusive, so that the happiness of my life vanished. It has been well said, 'A bad woman in the house of a virtuous man is his hell - even in this world.' Take care of how you connect yourself with a bad woman. Save us, O' Lord, from this fiery trial!"

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Saadi was quick at repartee - two instances will suffice to show his ready wit. Once his wife rebuked him with the following taunt: "Are you not the same creature whom my father ransomed from captivity from the Franks for ten dinars?" "Yes" was his immediate reply, "he redeemed me for ten dinars and enslaved me to you for a hundred."

On another occasion, when a poet from the city of Tabriz took offense at Saadi for some reason, and asked him somewhat abruptly, "Where do you come from?" "From the delightful soil of Shiraz," was the immediate response from Saadi. "Indeed," was the sarcastic retort of the questioner, "the people from Shiraz in Tabriz are more numerous than dogs." The quick-witted poet of Shiraz replied, "The very reverse of our city where people from Tabriz are of less account than dogs."

However, this contest of satire was not at an end, and after a pause, the poet from Tabriz renewed the attack by taking a dig at the baldness of his rival's head. Turning up a vessel that chanced to be in his hand, he said, "How is it that the heads of the Shirazis are bald like the bottom of the bowl?" "By the same rule," was the prompt and bitter rejoinder from Saadi, "that the heads of the Tabrizis are as empty as the hollow of the bowl."

In spite of the misfortunes faced by him during his first marriage, Saadi married for the second time during one of his travels to Arabia. It is possible that he lived on affectionate terms with his second wife - judging, at least, from the anguish of his soul with which he recorded the death of his young child, which resulted from his union with his second wife.

He entertained his guests in a lavish style. It is said on one occasion that a rival poet despairing of his inability in returning the princely hospitality, and the liberal generosity of Saadi in an adequate manner, set before his former host, now a guest in his house, the plainest and simplest of dishes. His explanation for his conduct was hidden in a somewhat remarkable language, "I should have found great difficulty in giving you one day's dinner in the luxurious style that reigned at your house during the three days in which I had the happiness of staying with you. But in this, my economical mode of entertainment, I could indulge myself for years in the pleasure of your company, without feeling the expense."

In the later stages of his life, Saadi retired to a small house near Shiraz, where he passed his time in prayers and fasting, and in receiving guests from the noblest of the land.

It was the custom of his illustrious visitors to take with them all kinds of meat and other food for Saadi. After eating from the food, Saadi always put what remained in a basket suspended from his window so that the poor woodcutters of Shiraz who passed his house may eat from it and satisfy their hunger. It is said, and is firmly believed by his biographers that one day a man dressed as a woodcutter approached the basket with the intent of robbing its contents. And, when he put his hand inside the basket, it became paralyzed. In desperation, the thief called out to Saadi for help. Saadi took compassion on the miserable condition of the man, offered a prayer to God to restore the strength of his arm, and gifted him, with a

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proper admonition, a portion of the food, which he had attempted to carry off by stealth.

In the year 1265 CE, the Atabak rulers of Persia were replaced by the Mughal dynasty of Persia. Earlier in the year 1258 CE, the Mongol armies under Chengiz Khan and his son Hulagu had sacked Baghdad. Abaqa the son of Hulagu established the Ilkhanid Dynasty in Persia. It is said that one of the military commanders of Hulagu who had been made the Governor of Shiraz compelled the grocers of the markets of Shiraz and its people to purchase from their rulers, some dates for a large amount, which had but a small value. The matter was brought to the notice of Saadi who immediately addressed a letter in verse to the Governor of Shiraz, pointing out that the poet's brother was so poor that "he had no trousers on his legs, and yet he had been compelled to buy dates at an exorbitant price." "A worse misfortune than this," it was added, "there was not!" Saadi's appeal was successful, and the decree for the purchase of dates was withdrawn, and not only were dates given free of charge to the petitioner, but "a paltry sum" was placed at his disposal as a gift from the governor on "learning that the man was poor."

When the second of the Mughal monarchs ascended the throne of Persia in 1265 CE, he chanced one day, in the company of some of his ministers to meet Saadi. He was astonished to find that the ministers in his company extended more respect to Saadi in his presence, which was worthy of a royal personage. The ruler enquired from his ministers the reasons for this strange behavior and he was asked in return whether he had not heard of the great

Shaikh Saadi whose poetry was famous throughout the Land of Persia and the Muslim world. The result was that Shaikh Saadi was summoned to the royal presence, and the monarch asked the poet to "give him good counsel." "You will not bear anything with you from this world to the next," was the reply from Saadi "save a reward or a punishment, and the choice now rests with you." The monarch felt the reproach in the words of Saadi. When it was time to take leave from the presence of the monarch, Saadi whispered in the royal ear the following verses of wisdom on how a monarch should conduct himself with his subjects:

"A monarch is a shadow of God;

The shadow should be a close companion of its substance.

The vulgar soul is incapable of good,

If the sword be not king.

All the right that appears in the world

Is evidence of the monarch's righteousness.

A kingdom derives no advantage from him,

Whose every thought is an error."

It is also recorded that during the reign of monarch, one of his ministers submitted to Saadi five questions, to which he invited a reply.

1. Who is better, a man or a demon?

2. How should I act if my enemy will not be reconciled with me?

3. Is one who performs the pilgrimage to Makkah better than one who neglected that duty?

4. Is a descendant of Ali better than other people?

5. Would the poet be pleased to accept the present of a turban and five hundred dinars as subsistence money for his birds?

The bearer of the letter, the messenger who carried the letter to Saadi decided to take advantage of this situation, and be considered as one of the "birds." He decided to pocket 150 dinars leaving a balance of 350 dinars to be delivered to Saadi along with the letter. The reply of Saadi who had detected the theft ran on the following lines in verse:

"You have sent me an honored present and money.

May your wealth increase, and your enemies be trodden under your feet!

For each dinar may a year of life be yours,

So that you may continue to live for three hundred and fifty years!"

On receipt of Saadi's letter, the monarch was intelligent enough to realize what had occurred, he was deeply embarrassed by his servant's conduct, increased the gift to Saadi to no less than fifty thousand dinars, with a suggestion that some of the money should be used for the construction of a house in Shiraz to accommodate travelers. The

questions posed to Saadi by his minister remained unanswered.

Shaikh Saadi died at a very advanced age in Shiraz in the year 1291 CE. His tomb previously ornamented in beautiful calligraphy with extracts from his own poems, which had earlier fallen into a state of decay, has been recently restored by the Government of Iran on a grand scale, to mark the resting place of one of Persia's most gifted poets and men of letters.

His early biographers have described Saadi as a short man, and not very handsome. His head was extremely long, indicated a person of a grave, and dignified personality. His clothes were simple and they consisted of a turban, a long blue gown worn over his undercoat, carrying a walking stick in his hand. He was extremely courteous and affable to his friends, and generous towards his enemies. In wit, he surpassed every author of his age, and he had a rare sense of humor, which could make even the most silent and sad persons laugh in his company. He was a boy in the company of youths and a sage in the society of learned men. He was an accomplished scholar, an excellent master of pure eloquence of the Persian language, a perfect instructor of divinity, and a skilled painter of life and manners.

One of his more famous quotes is, "Whatever is produced in haste goes easily to waste." Another famous poem focuses on the kinship of all humans. The same poem is used - over those written by all the other poets of the world - to grace the entrance to the Hall of Nations of the UN building in New York with this call for breaking all barriers:

"Of one Essence is the human race,
thus has Creation put the Base;
One Limb impacted is sufficient,
For all Others to feel the Mace."

The works by which Shaikh Saadi - "the nightingale of a thousand songs" - is best known are:

The Bustan of Saadi an exquisite poem characterizing the moral precepts and rules of life.

His book Gulistan is perhaps the most widely read book in the Persian literature. The schoolboy learns his first lessons from it; the man of learning quotes it; and a vast number of expressions used there have become proverbial. They were written in an age - the first half of the thirteenth century - a time when most of Europe was weighed down in darkness and ignorance - the justness of many of the sentiments expressed in his book and the glorious views of the Divine attributes contained in it are truly remarkable!

The Pand Namah or the 'Scrolls of Wisdom,' written by Saadi is a small volume of poetry, which is concise and written in elegant words, was most popular throughout the length and breadth of the Persian speaking lands. In addition to the beauty in diction, it is written in a style that flows in easy cadence, and fixes the words of the poem in the mind of the reader. Most of the lines written there are committed to memory by the Persian readers to an extent that is probably not surpassed by any work in the Persian language!

The First Arab Explorer of Africa

The continent of Africa ranks third in size among the continents of the world. It is surrounded by water on all sides, except at Sinai Peninsula, where it is cut by the Suez Canal. Africa is a continent of amazing natural wonders, whose lakes, waterfalls, rivers, mountains and deserts are more formidable than any other found on this earth. It is the cradle of great human civilizations that flourished along its edges, people with a great past gifted with extraordinary artistic outlook and culture. Living near them, are the wandering bands of pygmies and Bushmen who have advanced little beyond the Stone Age.

Except for a few places, the vast continent of Africa was unknown to the world for large areas in its vast central interior were practically unexplored until the early part of the twentieth century. Among the first known explorers of Africa were the Egyptians. One of them had sailed as far as Somaliland five thousand years ago and had returned with his ships loaded with gold and other precious things. Later came the Phoenicians from the coast of Palestine who founded the famous trading cities of Tyre and Sidon,

three thousand years ago. In the fifteenth century the Portuguese, in the time of Prince Henry, sailed down the west coast of Africa as far as River Gambia. Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco Da Gama followed them in their voyages and discovered India.

At this time the Arabs were the masters of all sea trade in the Indian Ocean. Among them was Ibn Batuta, a remarkable man, one of the most notable of early travelers and became the first Muslim to explore the continent of Africa, and who left behind him a record of his travels. Born in Tangier in 1304 of a well-to-do Arab family of judges, he left home at the age of 21 to make his obligatory pilgrimage to the Holy City of Makkah, as every Muslim is supposed to do once in his lifetime. On his way to perform his Pilgrimage, he visited a number of countries and acquired a taste for travel. Before the end of his life, he was the only medieval traveler who is known to have visited every country ruled by Muslims. It has been estimated that he covered 75000 miles in the course of his wanderings.

Most of Ibn Batuta's travels were outside the boundaries of Africa. He had made his journey across Central Asia to India, then to Sumatra, China, before heading back to his home. During the last part of his journey, by sea from Alexandria, he narrowly missed being captured by Christian pirates. After a short tour of Spain, he crossed into the continent of Africa in the year 1351, traveling south from Fez across the Atlas Mountains. After halting for a short time at a place called Sijilmasa, "a very fine town, with quantities of excellent dates." Purchasing four camels and their food supply for four months, he accompanied a

caravan traveling across the desert. Three weeks later, his caravan came across "an unattractive village, with the curious feature that its houses and mosques are built with blocks of salt with camel skins."

After an uncomfortable stay in this place, the caravan moved on once more. Luckily they found plenty of water in the normally arid desert as it had recently rained heavily. One day they found a pool of sweet water among rocks, and were able to wash their clothes and quench their thirst. Ibn Batuta and others went ahead of the caravan in search of pasture for the camels until one from their party got lost in the desert. Following this incident, his companions decided to stay together and it was not long before they discovered the wisdom of doing so. When passing another caravan they were told that some of its members had been separated from the rest. "We found one of them dead under a shrub, ... with his clothes on, and a whip in his hand. The water was only a mile away from him."

This part of the desert, Ibn Batuta reports, was haunted by demons and if a man traveled alone, "they make sport of him and disorder his mind, so that he loses his way and perishes." There were no roads, or tracks but only sand blown about by the wind so much that the hills seemed to move from one place to another. Fortunately, they had a very good guide leading their caravan; although almost blind, he appeared to know instinctively the right way to go. Two months of traveling brought their caravan to the town of Walata, a country of Negroes, 300 miles west of Timbuktu. Once in the town the merchants met the governor who received them sitting on a carpet, surrounded

by his guards. The merchants were made to stand throughout the interview. Ibn Batuta was annoyed at this behavior and felt sorry that he had visited this country.

Ibn Batuta stayed at Walata for two months, and remarks that he was "shown honor and entertained by the inhabitants." He found it a terribly hot place but well supplied with water, date palms and watermelons. From Walata, Ibn Batuta hired a guide and along with three of his companions set off for Malli, the capital city. Journeying ahead, they came across a huge forest with enormous trees. Some of the trees were hollow and acted as a reservoir for water. Ten days later, Ibn Batuta reached the great river of West Africa, the Niger, which he thought was the Nile. It was here he saw for the first time a crocodile. Soon afterwards, they reached Malli, the capital city, where they were treated with kindness and food. However, the food poisoned one of his companions and made the rest of them very ill.

His illness lasted for two months at the end of which he was invited for a royal banquet, after which the king sent him a present. The present was a piece of fried beef, three loaves of bread and a bowl of sour curds. Ibn Batuta had on this occasion expected to be treated with respect and generosity and became extremely offended at being offered such a paltry present. To be given such a present was bad enough, but to have to stand up to receive it, as he was told to do so, appeared to him an intolerable insult. Soon after, Ibn Batuta had a meeting with the king in the palace courtyard. The king received him seated on a silk-covered platform wearing a red tunic and a golden skullcap. He did

not miss this opportunity for rebuking the king for his lack of generosity, and this had some effect, for Ibn Batuta was given a present of money, and another at the end of his stay.

Ibn Batuta was now better pleased with the king's hospitality. He witnessed two important festivals during his stay at Malli, conducted with great ceremony and strange customs. The king came to the festivals armed with swords in golden scabbards, quivers, and lances of gold. Hundreds of slave girls, beautifully dressed and ornamented singing praises accompanied the king singing his praises. At the end of the festival there was a parade of poets—a feature of the festival immensely disliked by Ibn Batuta—dressed as thrushes, with wooden masks shaped like a bird's head covering their faces. They stood in front of the king reciting poems, reminding him about the noble deeds of the previous rulers and urged him to do good deeds, which would be remembered after his death.

As a devout Muslim, Ibn Batuta was impressed by the regularity with which they went to the mosque and said their prayers. He also praises their habit of wearing clean white clothes at the mosque on Fridays; even if a man had one shirt, he would wash it carefully in time to go to the Friday Sermon and prayers. He particularly praises the Negroes for their hatred of injustice. Their country was free from robbers and the property of any stranger was completely safe with them. They attached great importance to learning by heart the Holy Qur'an. After a stay of eight months, he decided to leave Malli in the company of a merchant, and started on his homeward journey.

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not miss this opportunity for rebuking the king for his lack of generosity, and this had some effect, for Ibn Batuta was given a present of money, and another at the end of his stay.

Ibn Batuta was now better pleased with the king's hospitality. He witnessed two important festivals during his stay at Malli, conducted with great ceremony and strange customs. The king came to the festivals armed with swords in golden scabbards, quivers, and lances of gold. Hundreds of slave girls, beautifully dressed and ornamented singing praises accompanied the king singing his praises. At the end of the festival there was a parade of poets—a feature of the festival immensely disliked by Ibn Batuta—dressed as thrushes, with wooden masks shaped like a bird's head covering their faces. They stood in front of the king reciting poems, reminding him about the noble deeds of the previous rulers and urged him to do good deeds, which would be remembered after his death.

As a devout Muslim, Ibn Batuta was impressed by the regularity with which they went to the mosque and said their prayers. He also praises their habit of wearing clean white clothes at the mosque on Fridays; even if a man had one shirt, he would wash it carefully in time to go to the Friday Sermon and prayers. He particularly praises the Negroes for their hatred of injustice. Their country was free from robbers and the property of any stranger was completely safe with them. They attached great importance to learning by heart the Holy Qur'an. After a stay of eight months, he decided to leave Malli in the company of a merchant, and started on his homeward journey.

They soon reached a wide river, a tributary of Niger, which had to be crossed by boats. Here he saw huge animals, which he took to be elephants. His companion told him that they were hippopotami, which had come ashore in search of food. The boatmen afraid of being capsized by them, gave the animals a wide berth. Nonetheless, the locals were fond of their meat and hunted them with harpoons attached to strong ropes.

Landing ashore, Ibn Batuta purchased a camel for his journey onwards to Timbuktu, an important trading city few miles down the river. This place was to be the goal of European travelers four hundred years later, but Ibn Batuta had nothing to say of the city except that its people wore veils across their faces. From here he took to the River Niger sailing it in a primitive canoe, hollowed out of a tree trunk, stopping each night to buy food. The river journey ended at a town called Gao.

Gao was an important trading place where two caravan routes met. It was a town with an abundant supply of food. After a month's stay at Gao, Ibn Batuta joined a caravan going to Tagadda, another important town, which was located in the Berber country few hundred miles east of Gao. Once again, he rode a camel, with another to carry his baggage. However, the camel carrying his luggage perished on the way and his goods had to be carried by the other travelers in the caravan. Tagadda was reached without incident although Ibn Batuta was ill most of the way because of the terrible desert heat. At Tagadda, he found that the local merchants traveled as far as Egypt and returned back with clothes and other goods, which they

sold at a high profit. The people were rich and led luxurious lives. Another important feature of this town was its copper mine where the metal was extracted and exported far and wide.

The region of Tagadda was ruled by a king who was away at the time of Ibn Batuta's visit to the town. Ibn Batuta wished to visit him and hired a guide to take him to the king. In the meantime, the king who had heard of his visit, decided to meet the great traveler. The king came to meet him midway riding a horse with a magnificent saddlecloth, wearing a blue cloak, trousers and turban.

He received Ibn Batuta courteously and generously, gifted him with a tent and sent him food every day during the entire length of his stay. Before he left, he was also given a camel and some gold as a present. Returning back to Tagadda, he found a message waiting for him to return home, so he brought two camels and enough food and joined a caravan going north.

On the last lap of his journey he had to travel through the country of Hoggar, where he describes the people as a "rascally lot." Here, a chief from one of the tribes stopped his caravan and would not let them go until they released themselves by paying a ransom of cloth and other goods. Fortunately, this region was crossed during the Holy Month of Ramadan, during which the tribesmen stopped their raiding expeditions and left the caravans alone. The caravan headed towards Sijilmasa without any further incident. In the last stop before Sijilmasa, they found a desert village

where no crops were grown, and its inhabitants living only on date and locusts!

It was at the end of the year 1353 that Ibn Batuta left Sijilmasa. On the way, it snowed heavily and the traveler suffered severely from the cold. However, he safely reached Fez, and related his adventures before the Sultan and his court. Many among them refused to believe what they heard. Nonetheless, instructions were given to the court scribes to write the story of Ibn Batuta and a record of his adventures in Africa have been preserved on to this day, where he shares the visions of the strange places visited by him, his joys and sorrows, and the hardships he had to endure during his journeys. After traveling across the continent of Asia, his spirit of adventure had called on him to make one last exploit across the unexplored continent of Africa, thereby ranking among the first of the great explorers to journey across Africa.

He had now traveled for 29 years and had covered a distance of 120,000 kms. His works are still considered to be the most reliable source for the geography of the period and the cultural and social history of Islam.

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Travels

The Travels Of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan

(1799-1803)

(Abu Taleb Khan, Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa and Europe During the Years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802 and 1803. Written by himself in the Persian Language, 2 Vols, Charles Stewart's translation. Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1810; 1814. pp. 161-162.)

Europeans, have always held the view that the people of the East are a curious and a backward breed. They had in the past escaped a similar criticism from Easterners because of the restrictions on foreign travel. Easterners were not encouraged to travel to Europe on religious and social grounds. Notwithstanding these prejudices, Mirza Abu Taleb Khan decided to travel to England in the year 1799. His friends thought him as reckless to undertake such a long journey to so remote a place as England. Mirza would also not have been tempted if he had not lost his post as a tax collector. When a captain in the British Army, returning home proposed to take him along, he eagerly accepted the offer to travel to foreign shores.

Abu Taleb was born in Lucknow, India. His father was of Persian-Turkish descent. He had settled in Lucknow

along with his family. Abu Taleb had entered government service as a revenue officer. After falling out of favor with his superiors, he proceeded to learn English and sought a post under the British without success. It was at this time, a Scottish captain, a friend of his, offered to pay for the expenses of a trip to England. He accepted the offer. After a wretched voyage, by way of Cape Town, he arrived in Cork, Ireland in 1799.

Going on to London, he soon became known as the "Persian prince." The King and Queen received him in their Palace. He was directed to present himself in the Palace when it was demanded of him. Following his reception in the palace, he was invited to other parties in high society circles. He remained in London for two and a half years.

The book that Abu Taleb wrote about his travels is a curious mixture of the trivial and significant, the superficial and the penetrating. His standards as a Muslim would sometimes sharpen his perceptions and judgments. He is naïve about such matters as ice-skating, but deals sophisticatedly on matters such as British materialism and disdain for the foreign. In his book, he records his thoughts during the first fortnight after his arrival in Dublin, Ireland.

Immediately on his arrival, he criticizes the Irish on their defects. He records in his book, "Their greatest national defect...is excess in drinking. The rich expend a vast deal in wine; and the common people consume immense quantities of a fiery spirit called whiskey, which is the peculiar manufacture of this country and part of Scotland..."

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He writes about the climate of Ireland in the following words:

"About a fortnight after my arrival, there fell a heavy shower of snow. As I had never before seen anything of the kind, I was much delighted by it. The roofs...and...walls were covered by it, and in...three days the fields and the mountains became...white as far as the eye could reach. During this time, it continued to snow, the cold was not...great; but when it ceased...I had all my doors and windows shut and had three blankets on my bed. I felt the frost pierce through me...the fire had scarce...effect on me...I frequently burned my fingers before I became aware of the heat. At length, I discovered that the best remedy was walking...during the frost I walked everyday for seven or eight miles. I was apprehensive that my health would...suffer...from the severity of the climate...on the contrary, I had a keen appetite...everyday getting stronger and more active."

He continues, "...In India...I wore...a single vest of Dacca muslin, if I walked a mile I was completely tired; but here, when my clothes would have been a heavy load for an ass, I could have run for miles without feeling the slightest fatigue. In India, I slept for seven or eight hours...without feeling refreshed; but during the two months, I remained in Ireland I never slept more than four hours any night, and ...I never felt an inclination to lie down in the daytime."

He writes about ice-skating with fear that his countrymen would not trust this account. "In those countries it frequently happens that the ponds and rivers are frozen

over; and the ice being of sufficient strength to bear a great weight, a number...of people assemble there...and amuse themselves in skating. For this purpose it is requisite to be provided with a kind of wooden shoes, having pieces of iron fixed to their soles. At first, this appears to be a difficult operation, and many get severe falls; but after some months practice, they can slide along the ice with the rapidity of a horse on a fine road and turn in all directions quicker than the best trained charger...In England and Ireland this art is practiced only for amusement; but in Holland...the women will carry a basket of eggs or butter in this manner twenty miles to the market and return home for dinner."

Abu Taleb Khan left for London after staying about two months in Ireland late in January 1800 and is at once faced with a number of curious social adjustments. He takes lodging amongst courtesans of the day and writes about his lodgings in his book.

"A few days after I was settled in my new lodgings, some of my friends called to remonstrate with me on having taken up abode in a street, where one half of the houses are inhabited by courtesans. They assured me that no ladies, or even gentlemen of character, would visit me in such a place; however, as I found my house very comfortable...I was determined to remain where I was. My friends had the...goodness to overlook this indiscretion; and not only was I visited there by the first characters of London, but even ladies of rank, who had never in their lives passed through this street, used to call in their carriages at my door and either send up their compliments or leave their names written on cards..."

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He writes about his experiences while attending parties in London in the following words: "I was informed that the lady gave a rout that night; and that a rout meant an assemblage of people, without any particular object(ive); that the mistress of the house had seldom to say more to any of her guests than to inquire about their health; but that the servants supplied them with tea, coffee, ice etc...after which they had a liberty to depart and make room for others. Afterwards, I frequently attended these routs, to some of which three or four hundred persons came during the course of the night."

At one point in his book, Mirza Abu Taleb Khan summarizes the chief vices and virtues of the English. Among the vices he found abhorrent was their waste of time, lack of chastity, and prejudice in favor of their customs. The English wasted much of their time sleeping, eating, and dressing. He writes:

"...Besides the necessary ablutions, they...shave, and dress their hair...they put on twenty five different articles of dress; all this except shaving is repeated before dinner, and the whole of these clothes are again to be taken off at night, so that not less than two complete hours can be allowed on this account. One hour is expended at breakfast, three hours at dinner; and...three hours are devoted to tea and the company of ladies. Nine hours are given up to sleep: so that there remains just six hours out of the twenty-four, for visiting and business. If they are reproached with this waste of time, they reply, "How is it to be avoided? I answered them... "Curtail the number of your garments; render your dress simple; wear your beards; and give up less of your time to eating, drinking and sleeping."...

He deplores the lack of chastity among a section of the English society. He writes, "...young women running away with their lovers, and...cohabiting...before marriage." He also writes about the multiplicity of the public houses in every part of the city. "I was credibly informed that in the single parish of Marylebone...reside thirty-six thousand courtesans; besides which, there is scarcely a street in the metropolis where they are not to be found. The conduct of these women is rendered still more blamable by their hiring lodgings...in...streets, which, by their names ought only to be the abode of virtue and religion-for instance, Providence Street, Modest Court, St. James Street, St. Martin's Lane and St. Paul's Churchyard..."

Abu Taleb next proceeds to outline the contempt of the English for the customs of other nations. "I had a striking instance of this prejudice in the conduct of my fellow passengers on board of a ship: some of these...ridiculed the idea of my wearing trousers and a nightdress when I went to bed and contended that they slept much more at their ease by going to bed nearly naked. I replied that I slept very comfortably, that mine was certainly the most decent mode and that in the event of any sudden accident...I could run on deck instantly and...jump into the boat in a minute, while they must either lose some time in dressing, or come out of their cabins in a very immodest manner. In answer to this they said such sudden accidents seldom occurred, but...if it did happen, they would not hesitate to come out in the deck in their shirts only. This I give merely as a specimen of their obstinacy and prejudice in favor of their own customs."

Further, he notes in his book about the construction of houses with wood in London. As a result of this, there were constant fires in London. Houses were set ablaze due to the carelessness and malevolence of the servants. The fires in turn would immediately spread to the neighboring buildings and in many cases would burn half a street before they were put out.

He writes in glowing terms about the expertise of the English in putting out such fires. "I should...give the English credit for their invention and adroitness in extinguishing fires. They have machines...placed upon wheels and drawn by horses, can be conveyed to any part of the city in a very short time. These machines are worked by a mechanical power and ...throw up water fifty yards high; there are pipes of running water on every street...a hole is dug in the pavement, and a plug...drawn from one of the pipes, the water rushes forth and supplies the engine, which may then be worked for twenty-four hours, or longer if necessary."

He continues, "To each of these machines a number of people are attached and...are called firemen; they are remarkable for their courage and honesty: they... enter a house ...in flames and bring...valuable articles, which they have delivered to the proprietors (of the burning houses)."

"The only complaint...is that a considerable sum of money must be paid to the first engine that arrives, a smaller to the second, and so on; thus if fifty machines come to put out a fire, and all their efforts prove ineffectual, the sufferer, who is already ruined by the destruction of his property, is obliged to pay a large sum to the firemen,

which doubles his loss and adds to the anguish of his mind..."

In another chapter Abu Taleb goes on to describe the uncomfortable beds of the English people and their mode of sleeping.

He writes, "...They have, in general, two or three beds, laid one over the other; and the upper one being composed of feathers, a person is immediately swallowed... in them and finds...difficulty in turning from one side to the other. In the...depth of winter this is bearable; but as the weather becomes warmer, it causes pains in the back...above them, they spread a sheet, two blankets and...quilt, all...closely tucked under the bedding on three sides, leaving an entrance for the person to creep in next pillows, which always reminded me of a bear climbing into the hole of a large tree. The beds...do not afford any warmth; and if a person turns around incautiously, the four coverings separate and...fall of the bed.... All my other Indian customs I laid aside without difficulty, but sleeping in the English cost me much trouble. Our quilts, stuffed with cotton and lined with muslin are... more comfortable and warmer than blankets; and although it may be objected that to sleep the whole season with the same quilt next to the body is an unclean...custom, I reply that we always sleep in a night dress, which prevents the quilt touching the skin; whereas the English go the bed nearly naked and use the same sheets for a fortnight..."

Without trying to be profound in his analysis of the English way of life, Abu Taleb in his book is refreshingly

open-minded in his capacity as a foreign traveler to see the virtues as well as defects of the Western way of life.

It is possible, that he might have stayed in England if his original plan for teaching Eastern languages had been sufficiently encouraged. He returned home in 1803, going by way of France and Italy and then by boat to Constantinople.

The First Muslim To Journey Across The Empty Quarter

(Rub al-Khali, Saudi Arabia)

He was a man of many talents. He had mastered the Arabic language and its many dialects. Apart from this, he had mastered the Persian, Urdu, Pushtu, and Baluchi languages too. He mixed easily with people, moving freely in their midst in the bazaars, his keen eyes noting down customs and characteristics, observing to the smallest detail of their speech and habits. He could recall incidents with uncanny accuracy with his extraordinary powers of concentration.

Harry St. John Bridger Philby, son of a Ceylon tea planter and former head boy and the captain of Westminster School, had a brilliant academic career in Cambridge and in the Indian Civil Service. When the First World War broke out, he was the secretary to the Governor of Bengal in Calcutta. The war gave him great chance of putting his extraordinary abilities that he possessed to test. His superiors had also recognized his abilities and he was called upon to do

extraordinary things. New assignments and responsibilities were thrust upon him and he began a series of mysterious disappearances, away on the call of duty.

Philby's habit of disappearing from his job for long spells of time grew upon him at that time. He had already won a reputation for himself before the war, his knowledge of people of the eastern countries was unique, and beyond compare. Even as an officer with the Mesopotamian forces in charge of the Intelligence Department, he would suddenly vanish on some strange errand that required secrecy, a resolute will, and nerves of steel.

He traveled through different parts of India, Baghdad, and Tehran. However, the Land of Arabia had won the heart of Philby. As far back as 1918, an Arab who saw him passing through Ta'if declared that it was impossible to distinguish him from the group of Bedouins accompanying him. His command over the Arabic Language, his mastery of the Arab customs and his general bearing, made him pass easily as an Arab. There was only one difference, this man had noted, that set him apart from the rest were his blue eyes; and his feet were a little bit cleaner than the usual desert travelers.

It was his amazing knowledge of the Land of Arabia that brought him into direct contact with Whitehall, Lord Curzon, and the War Cabinet in London. They had summoned him for his view for the political events that were taking place in the Land of Arabia. He had talked to them of one Ibn Saud as the man destined to lead a united Arabia. The policy makers at the Whitehall listened to what he had to say and in the end, they told him that he was

mad for coming to them with such an outrageous political forecast.

Philby had smiled at them. He left with them the address of his hotel. He had told them that they could find him there when they wanted him. He did not have to wait for long. The news wires of Whitehall began to crackle and hum. It told them that Ibn Saud, the Arab Chief, was sweeping across the country with his band of soldiers like a naked flame. A major part of Arabia was now under his control. Philby was immediately summoned to the Foreign Office. Lord Curzon saw him there and at the end of two hours; Philby had packed his bags and left for Arabia.

In Arabia, Philby sought the audience of Ibn Saud. He was on familiar territory. He knew the land of Arabia and its people better than they knew themselves. However, this time he was a man with a mission. He was here on the direct authority of His Majesty's Government to represent their interests and he had come here to negotiate with the great leader of the people of Arabia. The Arab Chief was known to be a man of character, vision, and above all a man of principle. In London, he had predicted that Ibn Saud would march one day towards Makkah. The British Government wanted to offer King Ibn Saud an annual subsidy of sixty thousand English Pounds to keep the peace.

The day of meeting with the king proved to be one of the most important in Philby's life for it would change the course of his life forever. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between the Arab King and the Englishman, without which the great journey across Rub al-Khali would have never taken place. On his part, Philby had been greatly

impressed by the king. He had already a high opinion of the abilities of Ibn Saud as a leader and the meeting only served to strengthen that impression. It paved the way for a second official meeting with the king, at the end of which Philby would resign from his job to become Haji Abdullah, the Arab trader. Back home, Philby's exceptional gifts, and knowledge of the Land of the Middle East did not go unrecognized. Honors came his way. Philby was made advisor to the Ministry of Interior of Mesopotamia in 1921. A year after that he was appointed as Britain's representative in Transjordan.

It happened exactly as Philby had predicted during one of his meetings in the Foreign Office in London. Ibn Saud had conquered the holy land of Makkah al-Mukarramah. The Foreign Office was worried. Their desire for peace in Arabia had not been achieved. There was only one thing that had to be done immediately. Philby had to be recalled and his services would have to be used to deal with this new situation.

Back in Arabia, Philby sought a meeting with the king. It was immediately granted to him. Ibn Saud saw him in his tent and the meeting lasted for several hours. Nobody knew exactly what had transpired between the two. When Philby emerged out that night from Ibn Saud's tent, his first act was to cable London his resignation of all the offices he had held, in the process foregoing his ranks, promotions-everything that he had achieved during his lifetime. He embraced the Religion of Islam and decided to become a trader in Jeddah. John Philby came to be known as Haji Abdullah.

He gave up everything for the sake of his religion, the security of his career, his home, and his religion and became a Muslim. He observed the tenets of his new faith more rigidly than the Arabs themselves did. As a trader, he polished his knowledge of Arabic and its dialects until he could speak them perfectly with the ease of a native of the land of Arabia.

In the meantime, his friendship with the king brought him additional responsibilities. Abdullah became the finance minister to King Ibn Saud. The king's palace of Jeddah was placed at his disposal and his friendship with the king was now placed on a permanent basis. The two men had understood each other perfectly, respected each other's intellect, recognized in one another qualities of greatness, reserve, and tolerance. Both of them were men of few words.

Ibn Saud was a man of high ideals and strict principles. He sincerely believed in the Holy Qur'an and followed it in both the letter and spirit. Smoking and drinking were abhorrent to him. He set high standards of morality on himself and those around him. The king had mastered the art of self-discipline, a quality that helped him to impose order and discipline on others. He possessed a quality of peace and majesty that made others look towards him for leadership. All these qualities appealed strongly to a man of Abdullah's character.

Abdullah as John Philby had for a long time, cherished a deep desire to explore the wild desert land of Southern Arabia known to the Arabs as Rub al-Khali. He wanted to be the first man to cross this wide stretch of 'dead' wilderness in the desert, where even the animals living there died of

thirst and starvation, and where even the carrion could not penetrate to pick on their bones. He did not know at that time the events that led to his adopting Arabia, as his homeland would have a direct bearing upon the grand journey across Rub al-Khali, which would take place in the year 1932.

As John Philby, he had established for himself a reputation of sorts as a great traveler when he had crossed Arabia from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea at the end of the First World War. At that time, his journey had helped him map unexplored territories in Arabia, which had been hitherto left as unknown blanks in the map of Arabia. He had made the crossing from the sea to sea across Arabia within forty-four days.

He had heard people talk about the desert of Rub al-Khali and its strange legends. Stories that reached him told him of a mysterious ruin in the heart of this desert and a great block of iron, as big as a camel that was present there. These stories served as a fuel to his imagination and developed in him a deep yearning, an insatiable desire to explore the ruins of the long forgotten city in the desert-remains of the distant past- that would perhaps tell a story about Arabia's past, which nobody had yet come across.

Haji Abdullah had made him home in Jeddah living at the fringe of the great desert, which he hoped to conquer some day. But, he knew this was not going to happen in a day. It required careful study and constant planning. He waited by the green waters of the Red Sea thinking about the expedition across Rub al-Khali. His reversion to Islam had given him the peace of mind that he had long sought

for and had developed in him a better understanding of the land of Arabia and its people along with the determination to see his mission to the very end.

In the meantime, his friendship with the king of Arabia grew. He would meet him on a daily basis and spoke to him frequently of his ambition to be the first man of modern times to cross the desert of Rub al-Khali. It was not until 1930 that the king Ibn Saud gave his assent to this expedition. Ibn Saud saw in him an instrument to help him map and investigate his great Empire that covered vast tracts of unknown desert lands.

Abdullah's joy knew no bounds. The expedition became his sole obsession. There were delays and disappointments. The disappointment came in the form of Bertram Thomas, who had crossed the Rub al-Khali from the other side on March 6, 1931. However, there was still hope, for Thomas had not crossed the terrible gravel plain of Abu Bahr, which was in the very heart of the dead country.

In the month of December, sitting in the parlor of King Ibn Saud, Abdullah heard the magic words that he had longed to hear for a long time now. The King had given him the permission to travel across the Empty Quarter. Abdullah lost no time; he immediately set forth to Hofuf to make the final preparations for the journey. For a fortnight after that, he stayed in al-Hassa district mapping it and making notes in his diary, while word was sent out everywhere to summon the necessary people who would accompany Abdullah on this trip.

The D-day soon arrived. The camels, guides, and a small party of friends had gathered at the wells of Dulaiqiya

thirst and starvation, and where even the carrion could not penetrate to pick on their bones. He did not know at that time the events that led to his adopting Arabia, as his homeland would have a direct bearing upon the grand journey across Rub al-Khali, which would take place in the year 1932.

As John Philby, he had established for himself a reputation of sorts as a great traveler when he had crossed Arabia from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea at the end of the First World War. At that time, his journey had helped him map unexplored territories in Arabia, which had been hitherto left as unknown blanks in the map of Arabia. He had made the crossing from the sea to sea across Arabia within forty-four days.

He had heard people talk about the desert of Rub al-Khali and its strange legends. Stories that reached him told him of a mysterious ruin in the heart of this desert and a great block of iron, as big as a camel that was present there. These stories served as a fuel to his imagination and developed in him a deep yearning, an insatiable desire to explore the ruins of the long forgotten city in the desert-remains of the distant past- that would perhaps tell a story about Arabia's past, which nobody had yet come across.

Haji Abdullah had made him home in Jeddah living at the fringe of the great desert, which he hoped to conquer some day. But, he knew this was not going to happen in a day. It required careful study and constant planning. He waited by the green waters of the Red Sea thinking about the expedition across Rub al-Khali. His reversion to Islam had given him the peace of mind that he had long sought

for and had developed in him a better understanding of the land of Arabia and its people along with the determination to see his mission to the very end.

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The D-day soon arrived. The camels, guides, and a small party of friends had gathered at the wells of Dulaiqiya

on January 6, 1932 to wish them farewell. It was a dismal farewell, for none among them ever hoped to see him alive again. It was a cold, raw morning and there was a low fog hanging over the landscape. The fog blotted out everything beyond two hundred yards. A few minutes after 9 a.m. Abdullah's small cavalcade of cars swung out into the desert passing through the Victory Gate by which King Ibn Saud had made his triumphant entry into Hofuf after the surrender of the Turkish Garrison in the year 1913. After a few minutes, Abdullah and his companions had passed out of sight of those who had come to see him off. The great adventure across the Empty Quarter had begun.

Abdullah was in high spirits. He was marching forward towards his long cherished Goal of journeying across the Empty Quarter. He had been joined by a dozen Arabs on this journey at Dulaiqiya; there were four men waiting to join his party farther south, taking the number of people in his team to nineteen. There were thirty-two camels for the journey and between them - they carried a store of food and water that would last them for the next three months. Dates and rice would be the principal diet on this journey, but they also carried among other things, salt, pepper, cinnamon, butter, tea, sugar, cardamom, and onions.

Abdullah had done little riding on camels to prepare himself for the journey. He felt that a short ride on the first day would be wise. When they pitched their tents at the end of first day, he immediately felt something was wrong with him. The weather was extremely cold and he lay terribly stiff by the campfire unable to move. His companions piled him with cups of hot coffee. He got up but he could hardly walk. He staggered into the arms of

one of the Arabs and fainted. He was unconscious for a few minutes and his friends told him later that his face had turned yellow and they thought he was going to die. They put him to bed, and he went straight to sleep. Abdullah woke up the next day morning refreshed from the sleep, without any ill effects from the previous night whatever, and they resumed the journey.

The month of January was extremely cold in the desert. The thermometer had recorded a temperature of five degrees of frost. The water skins of the travelers were frozen hard and they had to lay them by the side of the campfire to thaw the ice before they could make coffee for all. The sand beneath was so cold that it seemed to burn tiny holes beneath their feet like red-hot needles. However, within a few days it became unbearably hot once again.

It was also the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan and the whole party agreed to fast. From an hour before dawn to sunset, they fasted for thirty days. But, it was only five among the group of nineteen, which included Abdullah, that fasted for thirty days without a break. The rest had at various times abandoned the fast midway, a privilege that had been granted to the travelers by the God, most High, of exemption from the full observance of the fast. During this period, the travelers survived on breakfast at sunset and the predawn meal at 4 a.m. The menu was rice and dates during both these times and an occasional hare captured in the desert, which was divided carefully into tiny fragments between the nineteen of them.

They were penetrating farther and deep into the desert

with each passing day, crossing the low-lying salt plains, searching for oases and reported ruins until they arrived at the outpost of Jabrin, the farthest edge of Arab civilization in the southern sands. Here, they were greeted by an old Arab, Jabir Ibn Faisal, living with his family in tumbled down huts, like sentinels at the end of the world.

Jabir and his family were the last human beings that the traveling party had seen outside their own group for 53 days. Jabir welcomed them by hosting for them a dinner by killing a young camel for meat, typical of the traditional Arab hospitality. He also presented them with a dog that remained with them throughout the journey and helped them hunt for an odd hare in the hostile desert in which they traveled. It was at this outpost, where the actual crossing of Rub al-Khali would begin.

For days, they traveled relying for their water supply on wells, which in many cases were covered deep in the sand and completely unrecognizable to any but the keen eyes of the Arab guides and trackers in the group. During the journey, Abdullah never wasted an opportunity to collect specimens of fossils and stones to be sent to London for evaluation and examination by experts. Earlier he had sent some specimens along with old man Jabir to Hofuf and given him money to buy presents for his family living in the lonely outpost of the desert.

All the while, Abdullah kept searching for the mysterious hidden city of Wabar. The group was heading southward and had only vague evidence of the existence of the city. During this time, the travelers had crossed the beds of two ancient rivers that had long since dried up. However, a

third prehistoric river was yet to be discovered. Legend had it that the prehistoric remains of the ancient city had been built on the banks of such a river. Abdullah had heard about this city from the past that lay hidden deep in the desert. Based on the reports reaching him, he had marked two probable sites on the map with information that had been supplied to him.

At last, they were near to the ancient city of Wabar, about which the ancient Arab historians had told so many strange stories and legends. The group had set camp a little distance away, where they expected to find its ruins. The next day they marched further into the desert heading in the general direction of the ruined city, when suddenly one of the Arab guides in the group caught the first glimpse of this fabled city, the ancient capital of King Ad Ibn Kin'ad, in which he had partied with his companions and concubines until they had drawn upon themselves the wrath of Heavens. A fire had descended upon them, wiping them out to the last man and leaving the city in ruins. The ruins of the city lay near, what appeared to be twin volcanic craters. On closer examination, Abdullah came across a fragment of metal, which was obviously a part of a large meteorite. This led him to conclude that the craters of Wabar were not volcanic in origin and they could have been caused by an impact of a large meteorite. The large meteorite was probably buried deep inside the sand nearby.

From here, Abdullah pushed deeper into the desert. The Arab guides, who accompanied him, were getting restive and they longed to return to their homes. The country had become more forbidding with the passing of

the days and the Arabs were reluctant to journey to the dreaded mountains of Hadramaut, which they believed was a place of death. The Arabs used every argument that they could think of to make him see reason and turn back to where they had come from and they constantly whispered among themselves. But Abdullah remained unmoved. With a combination of tact and persuasion, he brushed aside their arguments and at the same time increased the pace of their journey towards its proposed destination. The Arabs had been charged with the task of serving Abdullah well on this journey, comply with all his requests, and bring him back in safety. They knew very well, what would happen to them if they failed.

They were penetrating farther and deep into the desert with each passing day, crossing the low-lying salt plains, searching for oasis and reported ruins.

Nevertheless, Abdullah pushed them onward - they reached Shanna, which marked the beginning of the last part of their long perilous journey across the desert. From here, they would be traveling across the waterless desert, where they feared thirst and death. Some of the guides even threatened to leave his side during the rest of the journey. But Abdullah would not yield to any demands to return back and ultimately, his resolute won the argument. The group decided at last to make a dash at once across this great waterless tract to Sulayil.

The Arabs were weak and disheartened with hunger. None of them had undertaken such a journey before, and no human being had ever attempted to cross the Empty

Quarter from side to side, they declared truthfully. Abdullah knew that his companions were suffering, for he suffered with them. They had not eaten anything since they had left Shanna, four days back, and the hunger was extremely painful. Conditions grew worse, and the nerves became frayed as the travelers pushed forward on their journey. Even the animal life in the desert seemed to have disappeared and there was no game to hunt for meat. The camels, too, began to show signs of weariness due to the rigors of the journey. They went on still farther into the no man's land, which had been untouched by rain from the past several years. Plant life also had disappeared; the few remaining bushes had been stricken to death because of lack of water for their sustenance on the desert.

Abdullah and his companions had traveled one hundred and forty miles into the desert and had more than one-third of their journey behind them. He knew that a steady effort would see them through the very end of their journey only if those accompanying him cooperated in the task ahead of them. Regardless of the consequences, he decided to push forward on the fifth day. There were no signs of life throughout the day save for the presence of one brave solitary raven and a tiny desert warbler. At midday, the camels gave out and collapsed due to sheer fatigue. They would simply have to find some water. The whole party decided to retreat to the wells of Naifa, one hundred and twenty miles away. Here Abdullah had his first drink of fresh water since he had left Hofuf.

Then suddenly it rained. Rain fell with thunder and lightning. Whirlwinds caused by the storm made the sand

be flung across the landscape in terrible black columns. Typhoons swept down their camp uprooting their tents and burying them in the sand.

On March 5, the traveling party prepared itself for the last dash that was needed across this waterless waste to complete the journey across the desert. They eagerly began their trek that would lead them to human habitation. The march across the desert revealed that it was the worst section that any of them had passed through until now. There were no signs of plants or animal inhabitation in this lifeless sand. The birds too had disappeared. Even the rare desert animal that had chanced upon this waterless wasteland had met its death in the sands, with its flesh dried on its bones. The carrions of the desert did not dare to venture into this part of the desert to pick on its bones.

There were still a few more days left to complete the journey, but the worst part was yet to come. The dash across the great gravel plain of Abu Bahr was like nothing that any of them had ever seen before. Even the Arabs, who for centuries had been the dwellers of the desert, could not foresee that this part of the country would be devoid by all types of vegetation. These were the most critical days that they had encountered on the whole of their dreadful journey.

The party had started the great push at 2 a.m. in the morning, on the 11th of March 1932. At 10 p.m, nearly twenty hours later they were still on the march, pressing their animals to their outmost limits. The animals were already run down due to the desert heat and hunger. Notwithstanding the fact that the animals could collapse

anytime now, the group had relentlessly pushed forward until they were on the brink of human civilization.

The next day, the travelers found the badly needed fodder for their animals and refreshed themselves from a stream that ran from the mountains. They sensed victory at last, for suddenly animal life, which had been non-existent for the last three hundred miles of their journey, began to reappear. They had to still cover a distance of fifty miles to complete their journey, but the going was paradise compared to the privations and difficulties that they had face in the journey that they had just been through. At the end of their journey, they were back in civilization.

On the morning of March 14, the party was welcomed by the mayor of Sulayil as the first people who had found their way across the Empty Quarter. For many the journey of Abdullah and his companions would mean nothing. It was not a story that would be carried in the front-page headlines of newspapers of the world. Nevertheless, this story should be told for it was one of the greatest achievements in the history of adventure and exploration of the modern times. It was the triumph of human spirit for Abdullah had achieved the unimaginable by crossing the Rub al-Khali. He had pushed hard even when his Arab guides lost their nerve and wanted to turn back. In doing so, he became the first man to lay bare the legends of the desert, which had been hitherto been passed around as oral traditions among the people of Arabia. In the process, his name became a household legend among those who knew this great man and his magnificent adventure across the desert.

The Travles And Adventures Of Gertrude Bell In Arabia

Gertrude Bell was the daughter of Sir Hugh Bell, by his first marriage. Her grandfather was Isaac Lowthian Bell the founder of a large iron and steel industry in Middlesbrough in England, and a distinguished scientist, and a Fellow of the Royal Society who later was knighted for his achievements and became Sir Lowthian Bell. Gertrude Lowthian Bell was born in the year 1868 into the distinguished family of intellectuals and scientists, and spent her childhood in her Yorkshire home with her father and her stepmother, Lady Florence Bell. Brought up in a liberal, freethinking atmosphere of her house, she excelled in her studies, and passed out with a brilliant academic record ranking First in the History of Oxford in the year 1887. Her contemporaries classed her as the best among the intellectuals of those days, winning her place by right in the elite group with her brilliant mind and her radiant personality.

During her youth, she threw herself into the midst of all the amusements of the Victorian Age - dancing, skating and fencing - and was invited to attend all the smart, high-society London parties. In the countryside, she rode on horseback along with her hounds, hunting rabbits and entertaining herself

with other sports. In one of her travels, she was invited to visit her uncle, Sir Frank Lascelles, working for the British Embassy at Tehran, and this vacation in Tehran, brought her into the magic spell of the East - a spell that would bind her to the region for the rest of her life. Enchanted by the Eastern culture, she was bitten by wanderlust that made her into a permanent traveler touring the country from one end to the other, fascinated by the sights and sounds of the Persian culture and their way of life. Later, her travels would take her on voyages to different parts of the world, but it was the Middle Eastern countries that charmed her, drawing her to the region that captivated her like no other country in the world.

Although, she had an easy and an outgoing personality, there was a serious side in her that was forever studying the world, in which she traveled, absorbing everything that was mysterious and fascinating, always studying and investigating the things that captured her curiosity. Her inquiring mind knew no limits for she took a serious interest in poetry, history, art, nature and the politics of all the regions visited by her, and soon she gained recognition as a scholar with her writings and an authority in all these fields. It is true that she was born into a wealthy family, and had the privilege of accessing to all the luxuries that were available to her at her disposal. Nevertheless, her restless mind and her inquiring spirit, made her to travel and study the life of other countries in the world, offering a rare insight to the people of her country about the ways of different parts of the world, and the people who lived in it. She hunted for adventure, and took delight in climbing the difficult mountains of Switzerland, and exploring the remote corners of the countries of the Asia Minor with the nomads of the desert as her neighbors, and had plans to scale the Kanchenjunga

the highest peak in the Himalayas, which was not scaled by others over half a century after her.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, there was no scholar worth his name to match her in knowledge relating to the lands of the Asia Minor and the countries that bordered the Northern part of the Land of Arabia, which was then a part of the large Turkish Empire that stretched from Istanbul to Iraq in the west, and to the south covered the lands of Syria, Palestine and Arabia up to the coast of Aden in Yemen. The Ottomans held control over the countries of Hejaz and Asir, but had left the major part of the desert land in Arabia to the desert tribes, for it was an unexplored territory inhabited by many Bedouin Arabs that recognized no authority except their own, and honored no other rule, and recognized only the code of the desert, the rules that they had framed, and followed through the centuries of their life in the inhospitable desert.

It was at this time, in the early years of the twentieth century that King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud was trying to assert his authority over the Land of Arabia, began to fight the Turkish armies stationed in the fortifications of the desert, and trying hard to extend his rule over the wandering tribes of the desert in an effort to bring them all under a central authority, and was persuading them to give up their nomadic way of life and settle down in the greener pastures of the desert as an agricultural community.

Gertrude Bell had for a long time set her heart on making this journey across the difficult terrain of the deserts of Northern Arabia, which was a difficult and a dangerous task for a lady to take on, not exposed to the ways and the dangers that lurked in the burning sands of Arabia. Nevertheless, she

had resolved to embark on this journey, and with this objective in mind, she set sail for Alexandria, and from there traveled to Damascus in the month of November in the year 1913. After reaching Damascus, she was reassured by the news that it would be safe for her to make the crossing as the warring tribes of the desert had come to terms of peace with one another, and the great desert landscape would be safe for her to travel to Hail, which was Ibn Rashid's capital in the Najd Region, where he held an uncertain control fighting the Turkish army and in constant warfare with the armies of Ibn Saud who was determined to bring this part of the region under his rule.

At Damascus, Gertrude Bell set out to equip her caravan that would carry her into the desert. On 12th December, a farewell party was arranged for her entourage in the native bazaar quarters of Damascus, and she had in her company the representative of Ibn Rashid who had sent an advance notice to his master in Hail about the English lady's proposed visit to the capital, and had got his consent before her departure. By 16th December, the caravan was on its way crossing into the Syrian Desert. Gertrude Bell had planned her journey in two stages. The first leg of the journey was to investigate the ruins of a Byzantine outpost in Burqa and investigate the spot of an extinct volcano on Jabal Sais. Traveling in midwinter into the Syrian Desert she was overwhelmed with intense cold in the freezing nights when the temperature of the desert fell down drastically, and the mornings brought with them intense frost, cold rain and wind. To make matter worse, her camels stumbled into the wet mud, and everyone in the caravan was shivering and - despite the warm clothing - chilled to the bone.

Nonetheless, Gertrude Bell enjoyed the ride in the desert lost in its silence and solitude, which appeared to envelop her

from all sides, where the only reality was the sounds made by her caravan animals and assistants accompanying her. On the seventh day of her journey, they came upon a camping ground of Bedouins from Jabal Druze who had pitched their tents at the site. At the first sight of her caravan, a number of Arabs came from the camp, galloping on their horses surrounding her cavalcade, and stripping her men of all their weapons. It was a terrifying moment for Gertrude Bell who believed that all the hopes of journeying further were now lost, and sat on her camel calmly and watched her guide explaining in Arabic to the disbelieving Arabs that the lady was traveling on a personal invitation of Ibn Rashid to Hail. Shortly, the leaders of the tribe arrived on the scene, and took stock of the situation. They knew her guides Ali and Muhammad. Order was restored and their possessions were returned.

On December 25th, they reached the ancient fort of Burqa, a Byzantine outpost that had not been visited by any European for centuries. After finishing her archeological investigations of this site, she headed her caravan towards the south and entered the Nafud Desert in January 14, 1914. The desert was covered in parts with green shrubs and flowering weeds in the winter season and her camels fed as they traveled further, slowing their progress greatly. For days, they traveled across the red-golden colored sand hills, and most of the desert tribes of Nafud treated her, and her company with respect for they had never come across a European before in this part of the world. In her account, Gertrude compliments them for their perfect desert manners. They passed through the Nafud desert to enter into a rocky terrain, filled with thorny acacia trees and desert palms to finally reach Hail on February 25, 1914.

At Hail, she was told that the ruling Amir Ibn Rashid was

away leading a war party in the desert in an attempt to quell the rebellious tribes in his region who had raised the banner of revolt against his rule. She was escorted to a palace, which appeared to her constructed after the fashion of Arabian Nights stories that she had read in her childhood days, and wait for the Amir's return who was not likely to return to Hail for another month.

In the palace, she made friends with the royal ladies of the Amir's harem, and got the permission to go wherever she liked and allowed to take photographs as she pleased. She was promised guides and escorts, and they would be provided for her to conduct her safely to Baghdad, which she decided would be the next stop of her journey. In order to remain unharmed during her journey, she hired the services of Rafiqs who would act as her emissaries to make sure that she was treated as a guest, and not as an enemy, for there was an unwritten law in the desert under which the most hostile Arab tribes would not hurt her if she was in the company of a Rafiq. The Rafiqs made available to her service acted true to the desert code, conducted her safely to Baghdad, and they arrived in the city on February 29, 1914. From there, she journeyed to Damascus passing through the fabled city of Palmyra.

Her journey, apart from being a great adventure, was an extraordinary achievement for a lady, and she had added to the map of Arabia, new lines of desert wells known and unknown, tracing the desert frontiers under the Palmyrene, Roman and the Umayyad rule, which provided information of immense value to T.E Lawrence in his desert campaigns in Arabia against the Turks in the year 1917 and 1918.

For the rest of her life, Gertrude Bell devoted herself to

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the Arab world. She became a powerful official in British administration in Baghdad after the First World War, and helped carve the frontiers of the Post-War Iraq, which would be made up of three provinces Mosul, Baghdad and Basra as an independent country, and framed the policy of modern Iraq with the help of her superior Sir Percy Cox who was the British High Commissioner. These policies were to retain, if necessary, the Kurdish territory to the north of Iraq, by force, and to promote the Sunni Muslims in the surroundings of Baghdad to rule over the Shias, and to exercise control over the Shia clergy, and if they wished help them take permanent shelter among their own in neighboring Iran. Gertrude Bell believed passionately in Arab independence, and she firmly believed Iraq had able men who could take over charge of the administration of their country, and its destiny.

In the spring of 1921, Winston Churchill, called for a conference on Iraq in which Gertrude Bell - the only woman among the delegates - had her way. It was through her untiring efforts that the Hashemite Prince, Amir Faisal who was ousted by the French in Syria, became the King of Iraq in the year 1921, and during the early years of his rule, she was the power of strength behind the throne, acting as the king's personal advisor in all matters relating to the governance of his country, and over his policy in International Affairs. Unwilling to leave the country to which she had become so passionately devoted, she was made the Honorary Director of Antiquities in Baghdad, where she founded the Iraq Museum, its main wing, which still bears her name. The Iraqi Arabs gave her the name "Khatun," a term that they used to describe a fine lady and a gentlewoman. Tired by the long years of strenuous work of championing for the Arab cause and their independence, she died in July 1926, and was buried in Baghdad.

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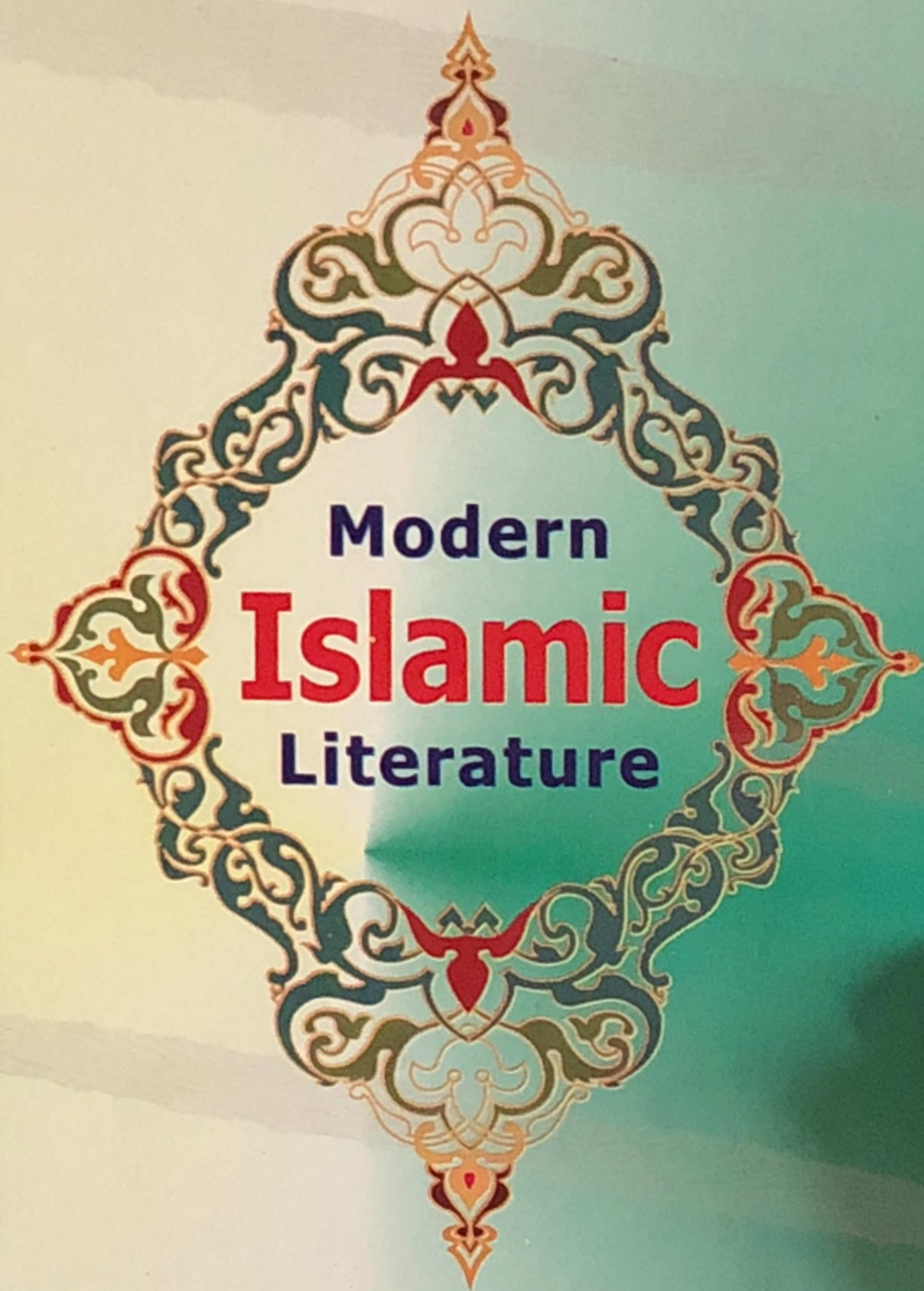
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Volume - 2

Modern Islamic Literature

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To the Readers!!

Knowledge is constantly on the increase and every day there are new publications both original as well as revised and edited manuscripts.

In spite of the great wealth of Islamic literature, it seems to me that a general study of the diverse Islamic literature is still lacking. This is, therefore, the subject of the present book, which endeavors to study its numerous aspects and bridge the gap left unattended to so far.

My fervent and sincere dua is that this valuable and comprehensive work be accepted by Almighty Allah, and the Muslims derive full benefit from it. May Allah grant the editors long life and the courage to continue with this spirit of service to Islam!

Iftikhar Ahmad Qasmi

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Stories

Honesty In Business

During the early years of Islam, the Muslim traders placed great importance in following the Islamic teachings in all matters relating to their trade. There was a trader by name Muhammad. Once it so happened that in his absence, his servant had sold a Bedouin who had come to the shop goods, which were only five Dirhams for ten. His master was at a loss to understand what he should do to correct the situation. He immediately decided to hunt all over the market place for the Bedouin. After taking his description from his servant, he set about looking for him. In the evening, he came across a man who matched the servant's description of the Bedouin and upon questioning, he soon found out that he was the same person who had purchased some goods earlier during the day from his shop. The merchant after confirming from him the purchase said: "My servant boy erred and sold you for ten Dirhams goods that were worth only five." Now, it was the turn of the Bedouin to be astonished and he said: "But, I am pleased with my purchase." At this, Muhammad replied: "Even if you are, we would please you only with what pleases us," and refunded the five Dirhams to the Bedouin.

Moral Of The Story: The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saws) has said in a Tradition that: "None of you is a Muslim unless he desires for his brothers (the other Muslims) what he desires for himself."

Ayaz breaks the precious jewel

Sultan Mahmood had a servant whose name was Ayaz. Ayaz was well known for his good manners and wisdom. Once, Sultan Mahmood was holding a precious jewel in his hand while sitting with his ministers. He told one of the ministers to break the jewel. Since the jewel was very expensive, the minister refused to break it. Then the Sultan told another minister to break it. He also refused to break the jewel. One by one all the ministers refused to break the precious jewel due to its great value. Now, Sultan Mahmood passed the jewel to Ayaz and told him to break it. Ayaz immediately took the stone to his hand and threw it hard on the floor. The jewel was shattered into pieces. The Sultan asked Ayaz why he broke the jewel while others refused to do so. Ayaz said, "The jewel is valuable, but your order is more valuable."

Moral of the Story: We should learn from this story that even if the things of this world are very precious and valuable, the orders of Allah are much more valuable. So, we should follow them.

Ever heard the story of the giant ship engine that failed?

The ship's owners tried one expert after another, but none of them could figure out how to fix the engine. Then they brought in an old man who had been fixing ships since he was a youngster. He carried a large bag of tools with him, and when he arrived, he immediately went to work. He inspected the engine very carefully, top to bottom.

Two of the ship's owners were there, watching this man, hoping he would know what to do. After looking things over, the old man reached into his bag and pulled out a small hammer. He gently tapped something. Instantly, the engine lurched into life. He carefully put his hammer away. The engine was fixed! A week later, the owners received a bill from the old man for ten thousand dollars.

"What?!" the owners exclaimed. "He hardly did anything!"

So they wrote the old man a note saying, "Please send us an itemized bill."

The man sent a bill that read:

Tapping with a hammer \$ 2.00

Knowing where to tap \$ 9998.00

Moral of the Story: Effort is important, but knowing where to make an effort in your life makes all the difference!!!

The Ant

One morning I wasted nearly an hour watching a tiny ant carrying a huge feather cross my back terrace.

Several times, it was confronted by obstacles in its path and after a momentary pause it would make the necessary detour.

At one point the ant had to negotiate a crack in the concrete about 10mm wide. After brief contemplation the ant laid the feather over the crack, walked across it and picked up the feather on the other side then continued on its way.

I was fascinated by the ingenuity of this ant, one of Allah's smallest creatures.

It served to reinforce the miracle of creation.

Here was a minute insect, lacking in size yet equipped with a brain to reason, explore, discover and overcome. But this ant, like the two-legged co-residents of this planet, also shares human failings.

After some time the ant finally reached its destination - a flower bed at the end of the terrace and a small hole that was the entrance to its underground home.

And it was here that the ant finally met its match.

How could that large feather possibly fit down small hole?

Of course it couldn't. So the ant, after all this trouble and exercising great ingenuity, overcoming problems all along the way, just abandoned the feather and went home.

The ant had not thought the problem through before it began its epic journey and in the end the feather was nothing more than a burden.

Isn't OUR LIFE like that?

We worry about our family; we worry about money or the lack of it; we worry about work, about where we live, about all sorts of things.

These are all burdens - the things we pick up along life's path and lug them around the obstacles and over the crevasses that life will bring, only to find that at the destination they are useless and we can't take them with US.....

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The Power of Soft Words

The slave of a king, once, escaped, and though a search was made, was not discovered. Later, when the fugitive returned, the king in anger ordered that he should be put to death.

When the executioner brought out his scimitar, like the tongue of a thirsty man, the despondent slave cried out: "O God! I forgive the king the shedding of my blood, for I have ever enjoyed his bounty and shared in his prosperity. Let him not suffer for this deed on the Day of Judgment to the delight of his enemies."

When the king heard these words, his anger was appeased and he appointed the slave to be a high officer.

Moral of the Story: The moral of this story is that soft speech acts like water on the fires of wrath. Do not the soldiers on the battlefield wear armor consisting of a hundred folds of silk?

(The Bustan of Sa'adi, P: 67)

Part:1

The Legendary Generosity Of Hatim Tai

It is related through traditions that in the days of old, there lived a man in the Land of Arabia who was famed for his generosity, and he loved spending his wealth to earn the pleasure of Allah. The tales of his generous character reached the lands of Yemen and the shores of the Syrian and Roman Empires. The Emperors of these lands liked to believe that there was no other person in the world who could match them in kindness and charity, and naturally, grew jealous of the fame of Hatim Tai and became hostile towards him. In spite of their many attempts to match Hatim in his generosity, the name of Hatim still continued to be mentioned in the markets of these great empires, through the tales carried about him by word of mouth from travelers of Arabia and other distant lands.

The Governor of Syria wanted to find the truth related in these stories, and he decided to test whether Hatim Tai was truly a generous man. He appointed a person to travel to Arabia, and demand from Hatim one hundred camels with red hair, black eyes and high humps. In those days, such camels were rare in the Land of Arabia, and if they were found they had to be purchased at high prices. It

was also a fact that Hatim, at that time, had no red camels in his possession.

Nonetheless, the messenger from the Governor of Syria reached where Hatim lived and placed before him the demand made by the Governor of Syria. Hatim - true to the Arab tradition of generosity - placed his hand over his breast and in reply said, "I have heard the message of your master, and I have accepted it."

He made provisions for the envoy from Syria to stay in a suitable place and provided him with all refreshments that he had with him, and in the meantime, had it proclaimed all over the land of Arabia, in his position as a chief of the tribes of Arabs that any person bringing him the camel, which matched the envoy's description, would buy the camel from that person and pay him the full price for it at the end of two months' time from the date of purchase.

In a short time, the people in the Arab tribes who respected Hatim and never doubted the sincerity of his words traveled from different corners of Arabia with red camels that matched the requirements made by Hatim.

In this way, Hatim borrowed one hundred red camels from the different clans and sent them along with the envoy as a present to the Governor of Syria.

Soon, the envoy reached the City of Damascus and presented Hatim's gift to the Governor of Syria. The Governor was amazed, and said: "We wanted only to test this Arab, and he for our sake, has run into debt."

He decided to repay the gift of Hatim in the same spirit

of generosity, and ordered that all the camels brought by the envoy should be laden with precious gifts and commodities from Syria and Egypt, and sent them back with the envoy to present it to Hatim.

And, when the camels were brought before Hatim, he issued an announcement for all the persons who had given him the camels to come and take away their camels along with the loads that were placed on the beasts. He gave all the hundred camels to the owners along with the gifts of the Governor of Syria and did not retain anything for himself.

The news of Hatim's generosity again reached the Governor of Syria and after hearing the complete account from his envoy said: "Such generosity is beyond the range of ordinary human beings and Hatim is indeed, an extraordinary human being ever created by Allah!"

The Legendary Generosity Of Hatim Tai

Next, the Emperor of Rome who was called as Heralcius, had heard of Hatim's generosity decided to investigate the truth about these reports first hand from one of his trusted men. He was told that Hatim possessed a white, fast-footed horse of pure Arab breed, as white as snow, the likes of which were not seen or heard in the Lands of Arabia or outside it. The Emperor ordered his minister to travel to Arabia. He loaded his ambassador with presents and gifts worthy of the horse in Hatim's possession, to be given in exchange for purchasing his favorite horse.

In a short time, the ambassador from Rome traveled to the Land of Arabia and made his way to the place where Hatim lived. As luck would have it, his visit coincided with heavy rainfall and snow in Central Arabia, which was the abode of Hatim.

Hatim received his guest warmly and arranged for him to stay in a comfortable lodging. Since, there was a scarcity of food in the land because of the harsh climate, he ordered his servants to kill his favorite horse, and prepare a meal

of it and serve it to his honored guest. After finishing the dinner with his guest, Hatim made arrangements for his rest, and went out of his tent and made way for his house to sleep for the night.

Early, next morning, Hatim went into the tent of his guest to arrange for his comfort. The envoy of Rome made known to Hatim his identity and the nature of his mission. He presented to Hatim, all the valuable gifts sent by the Emperor of Rome for the purchase of his horse. No sooner than Hatim came to know about the purpose of the visit of his guest, he became extremely anxious and looked worried.

The envoy of Rome was a clever man. He noticed the signs of anxiety on Hatim's face and said, "O generous one, if you have any objections about giving your horse to me then on my part, I will not insist upon it."

Hatim replied: "If I had a thousand horses of this breed, and even if the lowest person of the time were to ask it from me, I would readily part with it without any objections. Now, I am worried about fulfilling the demand made from me by the great Roman Emperor. My anxiety is due to the reason that I was not informed about your demand before; I killed the horse to serve your dinner yesterday, for I had nothing in my house for food except the horse. And, as an Arab, I did not want my guest to sleep on an empty stomach, and thereby bring a bad name to the hospitality of the Arabs.

He then, made arrangement for other horses of superior Arab breeds and other presents from the Land of Hejaz to

the Emperor of Rome, and gifted the envoy with some other items of value found in Hejaz, and sent him back to Rome, in the best way possible.

The envoy traveled to Rome, and related to the Emperor all that happened during his stay with Hatim. The Emperor of Rome marveled at the generosity of Hatim, and remarked that there is nobody in the world who can match him in the spirit of generosity!

Part:3

The Legendary Generosity Of Hatim Tai

Now, it was the turn of the Ruler of Yemen. He prided himself to be a generous, and a liberal man. The tables of his bounty were always kept open to the rich and the poor alike, and most of the needy and the helpless people of Yemen lived off his charity.

He wanted all the people in the Land of Arabia to praise him for his charity and help, and his name celebrated throughout the land, and in other parts of the world, as the most charitable person on earth.

However, the people of Yemen continued to praise the good and virtuous deeds of Hatim in his presence, and this increased him in jealousy, and he decided to get rid of Hatim for good. He thought; "Hatim was an inhabitant of the desert and is a person who is below me in rank. He does not possess a kingdom, power or authority, or the arms for capturing and conquering the other kingdoms of the world. I give in a day to a beggar what Hatim can give in charity throughout the year, and serve a hundred times

superior dinner to my guests at any given time."

One day, he prepared a Royal Banquet and invited all the subjects of his kingdom for a dinner. In the middle of the dinner, a man mentioned the name of Hatim, and the others immediately started to praise him in the presence of the king.

The king was furious. He decided that the time had come for him to get rid of Hatim once and for all. For this purpose, he hired the services of a rogue, the type who for the sake of a Dirham would not hesitate to shed the blood of a thousand innocent people.

The king of Yemen summoned the man to his presence, and he paid him a lot of riches from his Treasury and promised him much more if he returned after killing Hatim and bringing his slain head to him as a proof. The rogue was attracted by the riches offered to him by the king and swore a solemn oath that he would find out and kill Hatim from the tribe of Tai.

He traveled through the hot deserts of Arabia, stopping every now and then to ask for directions to locate Hatim Tai. After a time, he reached his destination, and he met a good-natured, fair-complexioned man. It appeared to him that the man in front of him had a look of distinction and greatness written on his forehead, along with his good-natured manners.

The young man before him inquired in a gentle manner, and asked, "From where do you come? And, where is your destination?"

The rogue replied: "I come from the Land of Yemen and intend to travel to Syria."

The young man requested him: "In that case, please be my guest in my house for the night, so that I may serve you with whatever dinner that has been cooked in my house. I would consider it an honor, if you grace my humble abode with your presence."

The rogue was fascinated by the good manners of the man before him, and he was provided with a comfortable place for sleeping for the night, and treated in a hospitable manner that was suitable for kings and the nobles of the land. His host took every care to see that all his needs were met, and was extremely anxious about the welfare of his guest.

The rogue was deeply impressed with his hospitality, and in his heart grew a deep liking and respect for a man who had treated a stranger like him with such a lavish hospitality.

The next morning, the rogue prepared himself to take leave of his host. His host, however, insisted that the man stay with him for a few more days as the journey to Syria in the desert was hard and dangerous.

In due course of time, his host asked him the nature of his business trip, and said that he would be glad to help him in any way he could in accomplishing the task that he had set out to do.

The rogue, at first, did not want the kind man before him to assist him in the task of spilling Hatim's blood.

However, on the persistence of his host, he revealed to him the nature of his mission. And, he asked the help of his host to direct him to the house of Hatim.

The young man before him smiled and said: "The man you seek is standing before you! I am Hatim. Here is my head! Take your sword and separate it from my body and claim your reward from the king of Yemen."

A cry of pure agony escaped from the lips of the rogue. He fell immediately in front of Hatim, and kissing his hands said: "If I strike at the body of such a good man like you, then I am not a man, but a beast in the estimation of men, which has bitten the very hand that graciously fed me for three days, and showered me with love, affection, and hospitality during my stay."

He kissed Hatim's eyes and his forehead, and after embracing him warmly, set off towards the road leading to Yemen.

Hatim furnished his guest with all the food and other materials needed for his journey, and gave him a new riding animal that would carry him without any problem through the hot burning sands of Arabia.

Soon, the rogue presented himself before the king of Yemen and stated the facts as they happened to him. The king of Yemen was forced to admit with rare honesty that it could be said justly that there can be no person to match Hatim to the extent of his charity in the Land of Arabia.

Moral Of The Story: When a person considers the riches of this world as insignificant and worthless and

spends it in the way of Allah, then he is respected above all men. And he who loves wealth for its own sake, and is miserly in spending it in good causes, is considered as the most shameful and worthless among all human beings.

The Sheikh and the "Delicious" Jars

It is said in a story that Sheikh Abul Hasan al-Nuri had a habit that whenever he saw an unlawful thing, he prohibited, even though at the cost of his own life.

One day, he was passing on the banks of the River Tigris in Baghdad. It was time for his Obligatory Prayers. As he sat down on the bank of the river to perform his ablutions and prepare himself for Prayers, he noticed a boat in which were kept many sealed jars with the word "delicious" written on it.

The learned Sheikh was overcome with curiosity. He knew that the City of Baghdad was the center of trade and commerce, and he had never come across any merchant in his life trading in an article for sale called "delicious."

He asked the boatman, "What do these jars contain?"

The boatman replied, "You appear to be a man in the service of Allah. Why should you bother yourself with what these jars contain? Go and mind your own business."

Now, the curiosity of the Sheikh was aroused, and he

was determined to learn the content of the jars.

He persisted with the sailor, "Of course, I wish to know the contents of these jars, and I insist that you tell me what they contain."

The boatman replied, "If you want me to tell you the truth, then I will do so! The jars contain the sweetest of all wines produced in Greece, and they have been purchased on the orders of Caliph Mutazed, which he is extremely fond of."

The Sheikh looked about the boat, and he noticed a heavy stick that was held in the hands of the sailor boy in the boat. He said to the boatman, "Give that stick in my hands."

The boatman was amused. He had not come across any person in his life with the courage to cross the path of the Caliph and live to see another day, and the Sheikh who was from Baghdad knew that their Caliph was a tyrant. He said to the boy, "Give him the stick and let us see what he does with it."

The boy obeyed instantly the words of his master in the boat and handed the stick to the Sheikh. The Sheikh took the stick in his hands, raised it high above his head and started breaking the jars one by one.

The boatman now started trembling with fear. The Sheikh had done the unthinkable. He started shouting at the top of his voice for the Sheikh to stop breaking the jars, but the Sheikh paid no heed to his words and continued with his task that he had set out to do.

The shouting of the boatman attracted the attention of a constable who was in charge of a bridge over the River Tigris, and he came down from the bridge to look into the matter. As soon as he learnt what had happened, he arrested the Sheikh and took him in his custody. The people of Baghdad saw the Sheikh being led by the constable to the presence of the Caliph.

Caliph Mutazed was known throughout Baghdad as a tyrant. The people of Baghdad were convinced that the Sheikh would instantly meet martyrdom at the hands of the Caliph who was an oppressor.

Soon, the Sheikh was led in the presence of the Caliph. He was seated on his throne dressed in red and purple royal garments with an iron mace in his hand, and a sword hung by his side.

After hearing the constable, the Caliph thundered at the Sheikh, "Who are you to practice such a disrespect to the goods meant for royal use?"

The Sheikh replied calmly, "I am the supervisor who enjoins what is good and forbid what is wrong."

"By whose orders do you practice this authority?," asked the Caliph.

"By the command of Allah, and the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saws)!", replied the Sheikh.

The Caliph probed further, "Who has appointed you to exercise this authority under my rule?"

"By Him who has made you a Caliph of the people of

Baghdad."

The Caliph was taken aback for a moment by the Sheikh's answer. After thinking for a while, he said, "What provoked you to break the jars?"

"Sympathy for you," said the Sheikh, "and for your subjects."

The Caliph asked, "How does it apply in my case and for my subjects?"

"I removed from you an unlawful thing in the closing down of which you displayed great neglect, and saved you from a certain doom on the Judgment Day. And, when you enjoy what is unlawful, you are encouraging your subjects to disobey the Word of Allah and his Holy Prophet Muhammad (saws). If you had abstained from strong drink, subjects will not dare to make it lawful for themselves what you have declared unlawful. Since the masses always follow their rulers on the path of virtue and sin, if they find their king on the path of virtue, they will all practice virtue, and the rewards for their virtuous acts will also be shared by the king, if Allah (swt) wills it. However, if they see that their king is corrupt, then they will also take the evil path and submit themselves to lust and passion, and the sins committed by them will reflect on the king on the Judgment Day. By breaking down the jars, I have been, in this way, kind to you and your subjects. I had no other motive in doing this act except for seeking the good pleasure of Allah, the most High, and the Glorious Lord of all human beings on earth."

After hearing the words of the Sheikh, the Caliph was

moved to tears. He said, "This duty befits you, and from hereafter, I authorize to take charge in my kingdom and make unlawful all things that have been decreed unlawful by Allah (swt) and His Prophet (saws). And, from now on, I decree that there will be nobody in the kingdom who will dare to stop you from enjoining what is good and just, and forbidding what is wrong for my subjects and me.

Moral of The Story: If a person is earnest in enjoining what is good, and forbidding what is wrong only for the sake of Allah, then Allah (swt) will make him secure against everybody in both the worlds."

Avarice In People Often Leads Them To Misery

A long time ago, two Arabs, who were traveling to Baghdad, stopped at a small village to have their midday meal. One of them had five loaves of bread with him, whereas, the other had only three. Just as they were about to begin eating, a fellow traveler who was passing along the route came up, and said to them that he had money but no food with him, and asked them whether he could share their meal. He promised to pay them for what he ate, and so the two travelers readily agreed to divide the loaves equally between the three, and invited him to sit down for the meal.

After the meal was over, and all the food had been eaten, the stranger laid down eight coins of equal value for the food he had eaten and after saying goodbye to his kind hosts went on his way. The traveler who had five loaves took up five of the coins as his share, and left three for the man who had three loaves. However, the other traveler disputed with the first, and demanded that he should have more money as a part of his share, and insisted that he should be given half of it.

The men began to quarrel bitterly, and as they could

not agree upon their shares, they decided to go before a Qadi, the town's magistrate, so that he could decide who was right.

When they placed their case before the Qadi, he listened to them attentively, and then to the astonishment of both the petitioners who had come seeking justice, and the people standing in the court, he said: "Let the man who had five loaves take seven of the coins as his share and the man who had three loaves take only one coin as his part in the share."

Both the travelers were not only astonished at the decision of the judge, but they were sure that he had miscalculated and they requested him to reconsider his decision. However, the judge again repeated his decision, and when the traveler who had three loaves protested strongly against the verdict of the judge said that it went against all rules of justice that he, who had only two loaves less than his companion, should be paid one coin, while the other should have seven. The Qadi decided, at this point, to offer an explanation why he had ordered the money to be divided in this way. He said:

"One of you had five loaves, and the other had three, making eight loaves in all, and then, when the third traveler came up and joined you for sharing your meal, the eight loaves were divided equally between the three of you. Now, suppose each loaf had to be divided into three equal parts, there would, of course, be twenty-four parts. And, you have confessed that you have divided your meal equally between three of you, and each of you received what was equal to eight of those parts."

"But one traveler had originally five loaves, or in other words fifteen parts, and as he had consumed only eight parts, he must have given seven of his parts to the traveler who did not have any food. The other man who had only three loaves or nine parts, consumed eight parts from his share, and gave one part to the traveler. Therefore, as you can see, my decision is quite fair: the seven coins go to the man who gave seven parts, and the one coin to the man who had given one part."

Both the travelers, and the people present in the court had to agree that the decision of the judge was quite fair, although they had not seen it in that light before, and the man with the three loaves wished that he should have been wise enough to take the three pieces of coins offered to him in the first place by his companion. His avarice and foolishness had caused him to lose his case in the court!

Triumphant Pilgrimage

(Based on the book of RUTTER, OWEN, *Triumphant Pilgrimage*, Published by Lippincott, Philadelphia (C.1937), it is the true story of an English Muslim's Journey from Sarawak to Makkah. It is the biography of David Chale, a young Englishman who became a Muslim and married a Malay woman. Together they performed the pilgrimage to Makkah.)

Abdul Rahman had become a Muslim by deep conviction. He had worked for many years as an officer in the Far East. He was employed in the service of the Rajah of Sarawak. He was British and his name had been David Chale. His work among the Muslim Malays of Borneo had brought him in close contact with their religion.

Gradually, he came to recognize the power for good that the Religion of Islam exerted in their daily lives. He admired their tolerance, courtesy, self-control, and respect for their parents, and their charitable acts towards the poor. He saw them completely accepting the facts of life and death. He also had noticed their unshakable belief in the values of their faith and in the Unity of God.

Moreover, he envied them for their peace of mind.

They were always calm, poised, and dignified, accepting what befell their way as the will of Allah.

The peace of mind that he sought always eluded him. He worked for eighteen hours a day at a stretch in a hot tropical climate and he had felt a terrible need to acquire peace of mind. The Religion of Islam appeared to offer him the choice. He had studied the religion thoroughly, and it was the only alternative to bring him closer to the One and the only True God.

For a long time, he shrank from the decisive step of converting to Islam. He felt that if he became a Muslim, he would be acting treacherously to the religion in which he had been brought up. He suffered intense conflict in his mind. At length, he made his decision. He resigned from his job and converted himself to Islam by reciting the formal declaration of faith: "I believe in Allah and the Oneness of Allah, and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah."

He was given a new name. David Chale had become Abdul Rahman. Like any other true Muslim, Abdul Rahman also yearned to perform a pilgrimage to Makkah as soon as he had embraced Islam. Muslims all over the world aspired to go on that holy journey in spite of every hardship and deprivation that a traveler had to suffer on the voyage to Makkah. He was determined to overcome all obstacles that came his way.

His inquiries had shown him that a mere declaration of faith would not act as a passport to Makkah. The Arabs were intensely suspicious of European Muslims, for many

had disguised themselves as Muslims to set foot into the Holy Lands that had been forbidden to the non-Muslims. He realized that before he could set foot into Makkah, he had to win the confidence of the Arabs. His knowledge of Arabic was sound, but he doubted whether that would be enough to get him through the visa barrier. He wanted to sail to the Holy Lands of Makkah and Madinah, recognized as a Muslim.

He sought the counsel of Muhammad Ali, an old trusted Malay friend. The old man thought for a while and said, "If one goes to the forest, it is wise to take a staff to help one on the way."

Abdul Rahman was quite conversant with the use of Malay idiom, and knew enough of the language to understand the old man completely. The old man was suggesting that he marry a woman, who had been born and brought up as a Muslim. Abdul Rahman saw the soundness behind this advice at once. Every genuine Muslim had the right to make a pilgrimage to Makkah. It was only those whose good faith was suspect encountered difficulties in getting through. A Muslim woman could go to Makkah without hindrance. It was only natural for a man to take his wife if he could afford the journey. A believing Muslim woman would definitely increase his prospects of getting through the visa formalities.

It was characteristic of his determination to perform the Hajj that he did not hesitate to accept his friend's advice. He was prepared to marry a Muslim woman according to the Islamic rites. His choice fell upon Munirah, a beautiful Malay girl, whom he had known since her

childhood. It was an arranged marriage. Like every Malay man or woman, Munirah eagerly desired to travel to Makkah on her Hajj pilgrimage. Every year, she had watched with envious eyes, the pilgrims embarking on their journey to the blessed lands of Makkah and Madinah. She had wept because she was too poor to go with them on the pilgrimage.

When Abdul Rahman offered her the fulfillment of her dream, she immediately consented to her marriage with him.

They were married in Singapore and soon after prepared to set out on their great journey.

However, as soon as Abdul Rahman applied for a visa for Jeddah (the port near Makkah) from the Singapore Authorities, he encountered suspicion and hostility. They talked of "international complications." He was told that his motives for being converted to Islam were suspect, and the circumstances behind his conversion, would come under the close scrutiny of the authorities.

Abdul Rahman then decided to take Munirah to England. He decided to obtain the necessary visas from the Arab Legation in London. He had no doubt in his mind that he would be able to convince the Legation of the genuineness of his desire to travel to Makkah as a Muslim.

At the Legation, his passport was carefully examined and he was questioned in detail about his conversion to Islam. At the end of the conversation, the secretary of the Arab Legation pushed his passport across the desk to Abdul

Rahman and said, "It is quite impossible for us to give you a visa to visit the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah." He leaned back on his chair to indicate the interview with him had ended.

Abdul Rahman who was sitting opposite to him made no move to pick up his passport that was on the desk before him. He heard with feelings of astonishment and bitter disappointment the secretary's refusal to grant him a visa on that December morning of 1935. He also knew it would be sheer folly to lose his temper or even appear put off by the rejection. His conversion to Islam had soothed his temper and taught him the wisdom of patience. His religion had taught him that the man who controlled his temper was stronger than he who overthrew his opponent in a duel.

"What crime have I committed that I may not have the privilege that is extended towards every Muslim?" he asked. "You have not committed any crime, which I know of. It is out of question, that is all," he replied.

"But, why, in God's name?," demanded Abdul Rahman battling for self-control.

"How long did you tell me that you had been a Muslim?" "Six weeks." "That's your answer. We have strict orders from King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud that no European may be granted a visa for Makkah and the Hejaz region unless he has been a Muslim for at least six years."

Abdul Rahman was staggered at the answer. The decree of the king was a complete surprise to him. He felt in his heart a deep grievance for those bogus Muslims who had

caused the King Ibn Saud to issue this edict. Nonetheless, he was determined to carry on with the task that he had set out to do.

"Then, give me a visa to Jeddah," he said. "It would be pointless for us to issue you one unless you are prepared to wait in Jeddah for six long years."

"The decree of the king makes it immensely hard on my wife," said Abdul Rahman, "for she has traveled with me all the way from Sarawak hoping to perform the rites of Hajj."

The expression in the secretary's eyes changed suddenly from one of indifference to interest.

"You did not tell me that you were married," he said sharply.

"You didn't ask me."

"You have her passport with you?"

Abdul Rahman produced it. The secretary scrutinized it carefully. At length, he picked up a telephone to talk to a colleague. Finally, he said, "This certainly alters your case."

Considering the circumstances, we will give your wife a visa to the Hejaz region. She can travel to Makkah and Madinah and this visa will cover Jeddah."

"Thank you," said Abdul Rahman, "but, what about me? My wife cannot undertake this journey alone." "We understand that perfectly. Therefore, we will give you a visa to Jeddah. Once there, it will be your job to convince the authorities there to allow you to accompany your wife

to Makkah and Madinah. Will that content you?"

"Thank you," replied Abdul Rahman, "it is said that it is wise to wear sandals until Allah sends to one the slippers."

He came out of the consulate with mixed emotions. He had been partially successful in his visit there. A visa to Jeddah was better than not securing a visa at all. At least he could go with Munirah to Jeddah. The interview with the secretary had given him enough indication that it would not be an easy task to go to Makkah once he landed there. However, he was determined to go to Makkah at any cost."

With the visas safely secured, Abdul Rahman was anxious to reach Jeddah as quickly as possible. The date of Hajj was fast approaching and he did not know for how long the authorities would make him wait in Jeddah before he would be allowed entry into the Holy City of Makkah.

He lost no time in boarding a flight to Paris. From there, they took a train to Brindisi, and flew on to Alexandria. On their arrival, they were told that an Egyptian pilgrim ship was about to sail from Suez to Jeddah. Abdul Rahman purchased his passage in the ship for both of them and embarked the ship in the Port.

On board, they noticed that the ship was filled with an extraordinary collection of passengers.

There were Turks, Syrians, Moroccans, Indians, and a party of Afghans who had walked all the way to Suez from Afghanistan, crossing the mountains on foot. They

had been walking on foot for two years to reach their prized goal of doing their Hajj. The pilgrims came from every class, the poor and the rich, simple and sophisticated, humble and from those of high society. Some of them wore European suits and felt hats. Others wore clothes, which had not changed from those worn during the time of the Holy Prophet (saws). Abdul Rahman watched the people of different nationalities as they streamed up the gangway of the ship. People of different countries and backgrounds, all of them united on a common purpose of completing their Hajj Pilgrimage.

On the ship were mothers who had their babies strapped to their backs, children, old men who could scarcely crawl without the assistance of others, healthy and dying people. Yet, all the pilgrims had one thing in common; all faces of the young and old were transformed with an inner happiness that seemed to glow from within them. It appeared to bind this assorted band of passengers, into a lovely unity. They were all following an ideal that was pure and selfless. All stood on a common level. All of them were pilgrims to the Mother of all Cities-Makkah al Mukarramah. They were all happy in the thought, that the Kind, Merciful Allah, in His goodness, would allow them to behold the land of Ancient Arabia, the country of His Prophet, and the Holy Land of Islam.

The ship had no cabins for the pilgrims who traveled third class. Abdul Rahman admired at their resilience to adapt to the existing circumstances, by staking their claims for a place on the deck of the ship by spreading out mats and mattresses, and making crude screens to protect their

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women-folk traveling with them. Cooking pots, crates of fowls and ducks, baskets of vegetables formed a part of their baggage. On its part, the ship would provide a ration of cooked rice everyday for all its passengers and supply to them hot water on demand.

A muezzin aboard the ship would summon the Muslims for prayers five times a day during the voyage. As soon as they heard the Adhan, the people would leave their tasks and hurry towards the Imam who would lead all of them in congregational prayers. They would all spread out their praying mats on their decks, turn towards Makkah for their devotions. A curious silence would descend over the ship during prayer times, except for the voice of the Imam leading the prayers and the responses of the worshippers as they rose and fell in prostration.

At last, the ship reached the Port of Jeddah. Abdul Rahman and Munirah found a room in an Arab hotel; a lofty building constructed of sandstone many stories high. They were given a room on the fifth floor. After a meal of rice and dates, they both headed towards the police station where their passports were carefully scrutinized. After asking innumerable questions, Abdul Rahman was told that his papers had to be forwarded to the Chief of Police, who in turn, would pass them on to the Amir of Jeddah, and they would pass them on to the authorities in Makkah. "How long would that take?" A shrug of the shoulders indicated that the Police there did not know the answer.

Abdul Rahman decided to hire the services of an Arab Sheikh immediately, who would handle all his affairs, and arrange for his stay during the Hajj. His choice fell on

Muhammad Saleh, son of Mustapha Babli, the agent of Abdul Rahman al-Qahtan. He left the police station with Munirah, in the company of Muhammad Saleh who assured them that he and his father, along with Sheikh Abdul Rahman al-Qahtan would do everything in their power to process their papers as quickly as possible, and assist them in every way during their stay in the Region of Hejaz.

Saleh took Abdul Rahman to meet his father, Mustapha Babli, who invited them to stay in his house until they left for Makkah. However, he warned him not to leave the house until his papers came through unless accompanied by his son Saleh.

Abdul Rahman accepted the situation as one of the difficulties he had to encounter during his passage to Makkah. The house of Mustapha Babli was an old stone building, five stories high with an immense doorway. He was lodged in the room of Saleh, which was on the first floor, a spacious chamber carpeted wall-to-wall with beautiful Makkan carpets. Munirah was lodged in the women's quarters, which were entirely separate from those of men.

During his stay, Abdul Rahman underwent the operation of circumcision, and discarded his European suit for the Arab dress. He found the clothes comfortable and they made him less conspicuous. He now spoke Arabic fluently and people would often mistake him to be a Syrian or a Turk. He found life agreeable in Jeddah. However, as the days passed by, he began to get anxious for there was still no news about his papers. On his urgent request, Saleh

arranged for him an appointment with the Amir of Jeddah. The Amir received him courteously, but it was clear from the meeting that he was not a man to be hurried. He told him that his papers had been forwarded to the concerned authorities in Makkah and it was necessary for him to wait until they arrived.

Abdul Rahman felt despondent at hearing that his papers would be processed in their own time. However, two days later, he was encouraged for Sheikh Abdul Rahman al-Qahtan had arrived from Makkah to see him. The Sheikh had brought with him good news. He had arranged for him a meeting with Prince Faisal, the Amir of Makkah. He was coming to Jeddah that very day and he had agreed to give Abdul Rahman an audience.

The palace of the Amir was a modern building. When Abdul Rahman was ushered into his presence, he found the Prince to be a man of great dignity who commanded a natural respect from men. He had imagined that the Prince had the power to grant him the permission and he hoped to secure this during the interview.

The Prince received him courteously, seated on a throne of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl. He listened intently to the request of Abdul Rahman to be allowed to go to Makkah for his Hajj. At the end of the interview, the Prince assured him that he would put up a personal word to his father, King Ibn Saud for no convert was allowed to go to Makkah without a permit granted under his personal seal. He was told the King scrutinized every application he received from Muslim converts personally before they were allowed into the precincts of the Holy

City of Makkah.

A long period followed. Everyday Abdul Rahman would phone up the Sheikh in Makkah for news about his papers, but none came. The Day of pilgrimage was fast approaching and he was impatient to be on his way to perform the rites of Hajj. The city was full of passing people and they left by different vehicles heading towards Makkah. Abdul Rahman watched them with envy in his heart wondering how long it would be before he could follow them on a similar journey.

Then one morning, Saleh came home jubilant. The King, Ibn Saud, had signed the papers and returned them to Jeddah. Abdul Rahman rushed to the Amir's office in Jeddah, where he received the worst blow of all. The Amir had received the papers that admitted that Abdul Rahman was a Muslim, but there was no formal authorization to allow him to Makkah immediately. It was not clear from the papers, whether he should be allowed immediately to proceed to Makkah, or wait for the six-year period to lapse before he would be allowed to perform his Hajj rites.

Abdul Rahman left the office of the Amir in utter dejection. But when he reached the house, he was told by Mustapha that King Ibn Saud was arriving at Jeddah to convey his condolences to the British Ambassador on the death of King George. An audience with the king would solve everything. He promised that he would arrange one, if Allah so willed it.

Three days later, King Ibn Saud arrived in Jeddah

accompanied by his retinue of soldiers, bodyguards, and officers. The king agreed to meet Abdul Rahman on the same day itself, after the midday prayer.

At the appointed time, he was ushered into the presence of the king. He had met Prince Faisal earlier in the same chamber. The king was seated on the ebony throne surrounded by his bodyguards. Even in that position, Abdul Rahman could make out that the king was a tall, and powerful man. His complexion was a rich deep brown and his face bearded.

Abdul Rahman was presented before the king. The king touched his hand and seated near him to make his plea. He told his story before the king. The king heard him out in silence, and in the end declared, "If pilgrims come to Makkah with a genuine desire to perform their Hajj, then I do not wish to prevent them for that would be acting against the will of Allah. In order to protect the City of Makkah from impostors, I have been forced to make a rule that converts to Islam must not only be Muslims for six years, but must have lived in Jeddah as well."

Abdul Rahman became desperate. Even in that state, he had sized up the king. The king was a fighter. He would appreciate another fighter.

"I have come to Arabia," he said, "with the intention of performing my Hajj rites. As a King of the Faithful, Your Majesty knows well that if a man's intention is genuine, Allah will count him as having made his pilgrimage, even if he is bodily prevented from reaching the city. If a man prevents a True Believer from making the Hajj, then he

must take upon himself the sins of the other who will be forgiven as though he had been purified on the Plain of Arafat."

He waited for his words to sink in and take effect on the king. He had worked himself up into a state of intense emotional excitement; his whole will set upon dominating that of the king's.

"In preventing me from going to Makkah," he said slowly, "is Your Majesty prepared to accept the burden of my sins?" As he said those words, he watched the king's face intently. His words pregnant in meaning carried in them a grave implication to a believing Muslim.

The king looked for the first time a little uncertain. He was a firm believer of the Holy Qur'an, and he knew that the man before him was justified in what he said. After what appeared a long time, he said, "Your words are true, Abdul Rahman. To turn away a Believer from the Holy City is a grave responsibility even for a king. Yet, I cannot give you my answer now. I will have to consult my advisors in Makkah, and I promise to send you a speedy word."

However, even in spite of the king's promise there was no answer from Makkah. The days passed. The city of Jeddah had almost emptied itself of the pilgrims. Only two days remained before the commencement of Hajj. Both Abdul Rahman and Munirah almost abandoned hope of performing their Hajj that year.

Suddenly, Saleh came running with the good news. The king had given permission for him to travel along with his wife to Makkah. The Amir of Jeddah would phone up

Makkah to ask the authority of the king to be sent to him by a special messenger. The letter would arrive tonight.

Late that evening, the letter of the king was delivered to Abdul Rahman. A special car had brought it from the king. Now, nothing would prevent him from traveling to Makkah along with his wife.

He was up before dawn. The distance between Jeddah and Makkah was seventy miles. The only means of reaching the Holy City of Makkah to be in time for the Hajj rites would be by a car. However, there were no cars to be found that would take him to Makkah. Every available vehicle had been hired by the other pilgrims bound for Hajj.

Abdul Rahman was now in a state of extreme panic. Without a car, it would not be possible to arrive in Makkah in time for the Hajj. Surely, somebody must have a car. He would pay anything for it.

At last, an enormous lorry fitted with wooden benches was discovered. He hired it at once. The driver was not expecting to go to Makkah. He had no pass. Mustapha rushed to the nearby police station to secure one. In the meanwhile, Abdul Rahman and Munirah donned on the Ihram after making a complete ablution. The Ihram was two pieces of seamless white cloth that every pilgrim had to wear, while upon this holy journey. They loaded their suitcases on the lorry and they were on their way to the City of Makkah.

As the lorry bounced over the rough road, they passed small bands of pilgrims walking along the road, chanting

the Pilgrims prayer on the road to Makkah. "Labbaik, Allahumma Labbaik," (Here I am O God, here am I!" Abdul Rahman stopped the lorry to pick the weakest among them. At length, they passed through the boundaries of the Holy land, where none but the Muslims may tread. The pilgrims began their chant with renewed vigor as they neared the city. His wife Munirah clasped his hand tightly with wonder and relief to be almost at the end of the prized journey.

There was Makkah!!!

It lay before them, gleaming in the sunshine, surrounded by hills. They could see the flat-topped buildings of the city and the minarets of the Holy Haram, the sanctuary of the Ka'bah, the great roofless mosque, whose vast courtyard is open to the sky.

Abdul Rahman was enchanted by the scene that lay before him, the loveliness of which could not be described in words. To him Makkah was less of a city than an "Idea", which had drawn into its fold, men and women from all over the world, together in brotherhood and worship. As he gazed upon the city, whose name had become a synonym of men's desires, he felt that he was in presence of something that was linked to the Divine.

Leaving the lorry at the gates of the city, the pilgrims made their way into the narrow streets filled densely with pilgrims from different parts of the world, and reached Qahtan's house. The Arab Sheikh received them at the door and greeted them warmly. "You have come here by the will of Allah," he said. He engaged them a guide-

instructor to teach them the rituals of Hajj. There was no time to be lost.

After a short rest, they headed to join the other pilgrims circumambulating around the Holy Ka'bah, the Ancient House of Allah. The Ka'bah stood in the center of the great mosque. It was covered with a black cloth embroidered with golden thread verses from the Holy Qur'an. The faith of Islam revolved from this pivot. Every pilgrim had to make the customary seven circuits on the marble pavement, which surrounded the Ka'bah, stopping once to kiss the sacred black stone that was fixed to one of the corners of the Ka'bah. It was protected by a silver mount.

Abdul Rahman and Munirah joined the tide of thronging pilgrims making the circuit around the Ka'bah. As they approached to kiss the Hajar-e-Aswad, the crush of the pilgrims became great. In spite of it, both of them managed to kiss it. From there, after their Prayers, they headed towards the well of Zamzam to drink from it. It was the water, which Allah (swt) had bestowed to Lady Hajirah, the wife of the Great Prophet Ibrahim (as) and her son Ishmael (a.s).

After completing all the rituals at the Holy House, they joined the procession of pilgrims that were heading towards Mina, and from there the next day, they would proceed to Arafat, which was located fifteen miles north-west of Makkah. There were pilgrims marching towards it on foot, on camels, lorries, and cars.

The Plain of Arafat was a vast encampment of tiny

tents. They had pitched their tent on it immediately after dawn and waited for the Day of Arafat to begin.

As soon as the combined midday prayers were over, the pilgrims came out streaming into the Plain. Many of them stood supplicating to Allah, the Most High to cleanse them of the sins of their past.

While the pilgrims were at their supplications standing on the Plain of Arafat, their white Ihrams fluttering in the wind like the banners of an army, there came out of the valley a fierce wind which many of the Muslims over there had heard about but never experienced in person. It was the whirlwind of Arafat.

Abdul Rahman saw it coming from afar. It was a vast pillar of whirling sand. It was high and set dark against the clear blue sky. It came raging over the plain with a menacing droning sound. It hit the tents pitched on the Plain with a force that laid them flat on the ground. The crack of snapping poles and the ripping of the canvas added to the uproar. The pilgrims bent their bodies to the ground to guard themselves, against the stinging sand that raced around them. Some leapt to seize their tent ropes before they were hurled away. Others ran to the panic-stricken beasts.

Camels and donkeys were stampeding. Terrified animals meant for sacrifice ran helter-skelter among the crowd of people adding to the confusion. Three times the wind stormed around the plain, then died away with little warning as it had come.

For a few moments after that, there was an intense

calm among the crowd of pilgrims. A sigh of content and satisfaction went up among the crowd, and a murmur of thankfulness was addressed to Allah. It appeared to them that the departing wind had washed away the sins of those hundred thousand souls who had descended upon the Plain of Arafat to perform the rites of Hajj.

The great multitude of people began to stream across the plain to prepare for the next leg of their journey to Muzdalifah. Abdul Rahman stood apart and watched them as they passed by him. He had still to complete the other rituals of Hajj. He had to visit the tomb of the Holy Prophet (saws) at Madinah, and pray in the Holy Mosque there. Then he would accompany his wife Munirah safely back to her own country. His choice of her as his wife had been justified.

She had been brave, uncomplaining, gentle, and when the need arose most wise. She had grown dearer to him than he could have ever believed. She would return to Sarawak with the respected title of Hajja (one who has completed her Hajj). As for himself, he felt that it was the beginning of a new life for him rather than a journey's end. All his anxieties, his sacrifices, his tribulations were as trifles compared to the joy, which was in his heart for having been a part of this pilgrimage. He could not have accomplished this journey without the will of Allah. By his struggle against adversity, he had fulfilled himself, and by attaining his purpose, he had achieved a spiritual victory, which would sustain him all his life.

History

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History

History Of The Mosque Of Ibn Tulun In Cairo, Egypt

The Umayyad Caliphs ruled Egypt through their governors and their rule lasted for ninety-five years. The average duration of the rule of a governor was one-and-a-half year, but never exceeding five years. They appointed a majority of governors in the early period from the Arab tribes. When the Abbasids came to power, they started recruiting Turks from Central Asia to join the ranks of the army and their courts. Consequently, they were appointed as governors of certain Arab countries and one among them was Ahmad Ibn Tulun who was sent to Egypt. Ibn Tulun was of Turkish origin and the son of a Turcoman slave from Bukhara. Caliph Mamun appointed him as the Governor of Al-Fustat in recognition for his brave action in the service of the State. Once established, he managed to extend his authority to cover the entire country of Egypt. He not only broke loose from the Imperial ties, but also gave Egypt possessions in Syria and Palestine.

His reign marked an important turning point in the political situation of the Governors of Egypt. After becoming a Governor, he sought Egypt's independence from the

Caliph's authority. He achieved partial independence for a period of 12 years, and became completely independent for a period of approximately five years before his death in 270 AH (883 CE) and established the Tulunid Dynasty, which ruled Egypt for about half a century. Egypt's resources enabled him and his successors to live, together with their courts and armies in complete luxury, competing with the Caliph's luxurious style of living in Samara and Baghdad. Ibn Tulun added a new suburb to Al-Fustat in 872 CE and offered his soldiers pieces of land in the new district.

According to Marqizi, Ibn Tulun built a hospital in the year 873 CE, meant purely for civilians suffering from all kinds of diseases who were treated there free of cost. Regulations of the hospital included that a patient had to stay there and was not allowed to leave except after being completely cured. As a test, he had to eat a full meal consisting of one whole fried chicken together with a good number of loaves of bread. If there were no complications, the patient was allowed to leave. Ibn Tulun took a keen interest in visiting this hospital and supervising its affairs.

Later, he had a magnificent palace built for himself in 876 CE at Rawdah and supplied it with all articles of luxury, surrounded by vast gardens, orchards and pools. The military suburb of Al-Katai had seven gates leading to the castle. One of the gates had two lions in plaster surmounted on it and was named as the Gate of the Lions. He built his great mosque on Yashkur Hill.

Ahmad Ibn Tulun built his mosque when the people of the city complained of insufficient space within the Al-

Askar Mosque. The mosque of Ibn Tulun, now over a thousand years old, at approximately 26,318 square meters (6.5 acres) in size, comprises of a square unroofed courtyard surrounded by porticos from four directions. The Qiblah is located under the largest portico. There are also three external porticos between the walls of the mosque and the perimeter. These external porticos are called increments. The construction of the mosque was completed in two years in 267 AH (877-879 CE) as recorded in the Kufic inscription in the foundation panel attached to one of the piers inside the Qiblah portico. Ibn Tulun selected for the site of the mosque, the plateau that overlooked the Al-Askar Mosque, in the vast Maidan (square), which came first on the way to his great palace near the military suburb. Accordingly, the mosque was named at that time as the Maidan Mosque. Some historians believe that he built the mosque after the fashion of those he had seen while receiving his military training at Samara and while residing in Baghdad.

The mosque built by Ibn Tulun was of vast proportions and, although on similar lines of the Mosque of Amr, it had an advanced architectural style, and for the first time did not use any columns after the style of the Byzantine and Roman buildings present at that time in Egypt. Their place was taken instead, by built piers and angle shafts to support the pointed Islamic arches, and like the mosque of Amr all the arcades were arranged parallel to the Qiblah wall. Obviously influenced by the mosques of Baghdad and Samara, the entire construction of the mosque was done in extensive use of brick faced with plaster, and covered with Arabic inscriptions written in Kufic style and

enlivened with color. The windows were filled up with grilles of intricate geometrical tracery to reduce the glare of the sun from the continuous range of windows in the perimeter walls. The arcades of the courtyard with some of the earliest pointed arches in existence, the frieze of medallions on the walls, and the openwork balustrades of the mosque join together in producing a work of exquisite beauty.

For the first time, an outer enclosure to the mosque was built in Egypt after the style of the mosques of Baghdad and Samara. The purpose of this feature was to provide an area for informal activities and to cut off the mosque from the din and bustle of the bazaar. Hence, so as not to make it completely remote from the city, numerous entrances were left in the enclosure wall of the mosque to the many entrances to the mosque proper. The area of the enclosure occupied by the mosque measures 118 X 138 meters, including the balcony spaces that surround it on three sides excluding the fourth site. Surrounding the mosque on all three sides are enclosed wings called the ziyadas, measuring about 10 meters to ensure a peaceful atmosphere to the worshippers in the mosque.

Its unique minaret, with its external spiral ramp, located in the northern ziyada of the mosque, also distinguishes Ibn Tulun's Mosque, which is absolutely different from any other minaret in the Islamic world. This is due to its unusual architectural design. The present minaret resembles in some respect the minaret of the Great Mosque in Samara in Iraq. It is also said that Ibn Tulun set out the

Askar Mosque. The mosque of Ibn Tulun, now over a thousand years old, at approximately 26,318 square meters (6.5 acres) in size, comprises of a square unroofed courtyard surrounded by porticos from four directions. The Qiblah is located under the largest portico. There are also three external porticos between the walls of the mosque and the perimeter. These external porticos are called increments. The construction of the mosque was completed in two years in 267 AH (877-879 CE) as recorded in the Kufic inscription in the foundation panel attached to one of the piers inside the Qiblah portico. Ibn Tulun selected for the site of the mosque, the plateau that overlooked the Al-Askar Mosque, in the vast Maidan (square), which came first on the way to his great palace near the military suburb. Accordingly, the mosque was named at that time as the Maidan Mosque. Some historians believe that he built the mosque after the fashion of those he had seen while receiving his military training at Samara and while residing in Baghdad.

The mosque built by Ibn Tulun was of vast proportions and, although on similar lines of the Mosque of Amr, it had an advanced architectural style, and for the first time did not use any columns after the style of the Byzantine and Roman buildings present at that time in Egypt. Their place was taken instead, by built piers and angle shafts to support the pointed Islamic arches, and like the mosque of Amr all the arcades were arranged parallel to the Qiblah wall. Obviously influenced by the mosques of Baghdad and Samara, the entire construction of the mosque was done in extensive use of brick faced with plaster, and covered with Arabic inscriptions written in Kufic style and

enlivened with color. The windows were filled up with grilles of intricate geometrical tracery to reduce the glare of the sun from the continuous range of windows in the perimeter walls. The arcades of the courtyard with some of the earliest pointed arches in existence, the frieze of medallions on the walls, and the openwork balustrades of the mosque join together in producing a work of exquisite beauty.

For the first time, an outer enclosure to the mosque was built in Egypt after the style of the mosques of Baghdad and Samara. The purpose of this feature was to provide an area for informal activities and to cut off the mosque from the din and bustle of the bazaar. However, so as not to make it completely remote from the city, numerous entrances were left in the enclosure wall opposite to the many entrances to the mosque proper. The total area of the enclosure occupied by the mosque is that measures 118 X 138 meters, including the bare walled spaces that surround it on three sides excluding the Qiblah site. Surrounding the mosque on all three sides are narrow enclosed wings called the ziyadas, measuring about 19 meters to ensure a peaceful atmosphere to the worshippers in the mosque.

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amusing himself by twisting a piece of paper around his finger and while pulling it, it took the shape of a spiral cone. He then directed his architect to build a minaret in that shape.

The present minaret was completely rebuilt at the end of 7th century AH (13th century CE) for the third or fourth time in 131 feet in height. Arab historians mention that the first minaret built by Ibn Tulun was made up of burnt bricks like the rest of the mosque. The minaret found today is entirely built up of dressed stone by the Mamluk Sultan Lajin in 696 AH (1296 CE) and since then it has retained its present shape. Its architectural elements are a mixture of Iraqi stairs that encircle the minaret from outside. It rests on a high square base, and the Egyptian influence is evident in the high double pavilion and the incense burner at the terminating part of the minaret.

According to contemporary sources, the early minarets of Egypt were not used for giving the call to prayer, but were used to warn people of the city of impending dangers from outside. Uprising and revolts on the southern borders of Egypt compelled the Umayyad and Abbasid governors to take security measures to end them. One of these measures was building a fort for guards. From the minarets of the small mosques inside the forts, signals of the movements of rebels were sent. Such warnings were relayed from one minaret to another until they reached the main garrison commanded by the governor, in order to send support to suppress the uprisings. The site of each fort was carefully selected along the Nile bank in such a way and on an elevated location that made each minaret

clearly visible to others. It is possible that Ahmad Ibn Tulun could have led the way for the building of high minarets in Egypt.

According to some authorities, Ahmad Ibn Tulun was inspired to construct the minaret of his mosque after the model of ancient Pharos, or Lighthouse of Alexandria. It is believed that in the year 700 CE, a huge earthquake caused serious damage to upper portions of the ancient Lighthouse. But, few repairs were made to it and the Arabs continued to operate it as before, until the reign of Ahmad Ibn Tulun. Ibn Tulun had acquired a taste for public works and had constructed many parks and buildings in Alexandria. He also undertook the first major restoration of the damaged Pharos in the year 880 CE and in place of the former lantern, erected a small mosque crowned with the Islamic crescent, and Ibn Jubayr, who toured the lighthouse in 1183 described the first level as maze-like filled with "stairways and entrances and numerous apartments, so that he who penetrates and wanders thorough its passages may be lost. A parapet wall surrounded the terrace at the top of the tier, and marble tritons were located at each of the four corner. Inside a wide ramp spiraled upward to the terrace." And, a mosque had been built on top of the lighthouse and Ibn Jubayr records that he prayed two rakahs inside this mosque.

The construction of the minaret was accompanied by another addition, an ablution tank built in the center of the court. According to Marqizi, the fountain was octagonal in shape, in the center of which was a spout of water or fountain for the traditional ablution before prayers, there

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was a verandah on columns around it, and a balcony with a balustrade on the roof. Maqdisi says that this domed fountain was constructed on the model of that of Zamzam at Makkah.

One of the stories related to the Great Mosque of Ibn Tulun is that people at first refrained from using it for prayers because of the enormous cost incurred while constructing it. They also had misgivings that they would be taxed to recover the amount spent on the mosque. When this matter was brought to Ibn Tulun's notice, he had it announced to the people that he had discovered a treasure during one of his campaigns in Upper Egypt. He said that the hoofs of his horse had struck a hole, which had led to the discovery of a huge treasure. This story may be true, because Upper Egypt contained and still contains many Pharonic tombs full of treasures buried with the mummies of Ancient Egyptian monarchs and dignitaries.

Twenty-six years after the completion of the mosque, the Tulunid Dynasty collapsed. Relations between the Tulunids of Egypt and the Abbasid Caliphs were tense for a long time and had soured over the years. After the death of Ahmad Ibn Tulun, his son Khumarawaih tried to mend relations with the Abbasid Caliph. He went as far as to give Qatr an-Nada (Dewdrops) in marriage to the Caliph himself. According to historical records he sent her to Baghdad accompanied by fabulous riches. However, the efforts exerted to gain the friendship of the Abbasid Caliph and the legendary fabulous amount of money spent on the marriage of Qatr an-Nada did not last long. The

Abbasids never forgave Egypt her independence, which made the Abbasid treasury suffer acutely from the absence of traditional tribute paid to it by Egypt.

Finally, an army sent by the Abbasid dynasty to defeat the last of the Tulunids achieved success. After entering the city, the Abbasid army's first task was to burn the military suburb of Al-Katai and the Maidan Palace, adjoining the mosque, which was a model of good taste and luxury and considered as one of the architectural wonders of the world. The Great Mosque of Ibn Tulun was, however, spared. A great number of Tulunid monuments perished, among which were countless pieces of art and marvels of architecture in addition to valuable documents related to Egypt. The weakness of the country was enhanced as a result of this destruction, which encouraged Fatimids in the West to try and conquer Egypt, and at the end they achieved their goal.

Ahmad Ibn Jubayr, the Muslim traveler who visited Misr (Egypt) in 1183 during the course of his Hajj notes in his travel diary that Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi used the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun as a retreat for the travelers from Maghrib Countries (Western part of Barbary and Spain) where they might live and receive lectures; and for their support he granted them a generous monthly allowance. The Sultan had entrusted to the people who lived and prayed in the mosque the affairs of their own management, without outside interference. They elected their own leaders, whose orders they obeyed and to whom they could appeal in times of sudden contingencies. They lived in peace and satisfaction in the mosque, devoting

their time exclusively to the worship of their Lord, and had found favor of the Sultan, the greatest help to the good on whose path they were set.

Over a period of years the city of Cairo prospered and the center of the city moved away from the Mosque of Ibn Tulun and the mosque fell into disuse. At the behest of the Mamluk Sultan Lajin (1296 CE) the building was restored and used as a Madrasa. During the 19th century, Ibrahim Pasha used this mosque as a military hospital.

The mosque of Ibn Tulun was for a long time in a sad state of disrepair. It was also restored in the later periods and is still being restored today as a major tourist attraction in Egypt.

History Of The Mosque Of Amr

The mosque of Amr, the conqueror of Egypt, was built shortly after his conquest of Alexandria from the Byzantines in the year 642 CE. The site chosen was Fustat (tent), situated ten miles north of ancient Memphis on the banks of the River Nile. The mosque is the oldest in Egypt and is also known by the names Taj al-Jamie (Crown of Mosques), al-Jamie'al-Ateeq (the Ancient Mosque) and Masjid Ahl ar-Rayah (Mosque of Banner Holders). Before his conversion to Islam, Amr ibn al-Aas had, on many occasions, visited Egypt as a trader and so knew the land well. During Umar's stay in Syria, Amr persuaded the reluctant Caliph to endorse an expedition to Egypt. Amr was put at the head of a 4000 troops and was soon on his way to Egypt.

Amr proceeded with his small army along the coast of Farama where he faced a substantial Roman garrison and fought them for a whole month until a fierce, final battle settled the issue in his favor. From there, Amr marched to the imperial fortress at the apex of the triangle formed by the Nile Delta. This fortress, Bab al-Yun, later the site of

Fustat, was the seat of the Roman government for this part of Egypt. It had unusually massive walls and was supplied by river from the Mediterranean Sea. Amr settled his troops in entrenched positions and sought reinforcements from Madinah. The Caliph dispatched a force of ten thousand and after a siege of seven months; the Roman governor al-Maqawqas surrendered the fort to the Arab army after a decisive battle and negotiated a treaty of peace. According to the terms of the treaty, the Romans were to abandon the whole of Egypt.

When the treaty was brought to the notice of the ageing Emperor Heraclius in Constantinople, he refused outright to ratify the surrender of Egypt and dispatched reinforcements to Alexandria to assert Roman authority and recover the territory lost to the Arabs. The Muslims had, therefore, no option but to fight on. Amr remained in the great fortress for some time, awaiting permission from the Caliph in Madinah to proceed to Alexandria. When permission came and it was time to strike camp, a pigeon's nest was discovered in the commander's tent. Amr is reported to have ordered the tent to be left standing so as not to inconvenience the bird. The Arabic term for tent, fustat, inspired the name of the city founded by Amr at this site after his return from the conquest of Alexandria. The mosque he built there bears his name and still stands, although enlarged several times after him.

According to the historical sources quoted by Al-Maqrizi, the fourteenth century Arab historian who later became a preacher at the Mosque of Amr, the mosque initially had a length of fifty cubits and a width of thirty cubits, with a

low roof that was not oppressive, surrounded by roads on all sides. It had four entrances, two entrances in the north and two in the west. And, a person who went out from it by the way of the Street of the Lamps found the eastern angle of the mosque to be over the western angle of the house of Amr ibn al-Aas and that was before the house was overtaken for the enlargement of the mosque. There was no inner court to the mosque, so in summer time, the worshippers would take their places in the outer court on every side of the mosque. When it was enlarged in 673 CE at the instruction of Caliph Mu'awiyah, four flat-topped turrets were added to each corner of the roof, following the style of the Mosque of Damascus and became the first minarets actually built by Muslims. In 710 CE when the mosque was completely rebuilt, a concave niche was introduced into it as a mihrab.

In time most of the people in Egypt accepted the Muslim faith, and the Arabic language became the language of government, culture, and commerce. The Arabization of the country was aided by the continued settlement of Arab tribes in different parts of Egypt. As a result, the congregational mosque of Amr had to be enlarged several times. Abdul Aziz Ibn Marwan, the ruler of Egypt had the mosque demolished in 79AH (698 CE) and had it rebuilt to accommodate more worshippers. During the time of the Abbasid Viceroy Abdullah Ibn-Tahir (827 CE), ruling on behalf of Caliph al-Mamoon, the mosque was enlarged and covered an area of 15000 sq. meters. In addition to this area, the Mosque was surrounded on three sides by large spaces, which served to separate the Mosque from the surrounding buildings to reduce disturbance from

outside which would spoil the quiet needed by the worshippers during prayer times. Under the Abbasid rule the Mosque received the form and shape that survived until the end of eighteenth century. During the Fatimid period, gilded mosaics, marble works, wooden works, and a moving pulpit were introduced into the mosque. In addition, a part of the prayer niche was coated in silver. At the end of the Fatimid period, al-Fustat was ruined as a result of a fire (1169 CE) started by Shawar, the vizier of the Fatimid Caliph al-Adid during a revolution at the time of the break-up of the Ubaydin (Fatimid) dynasty. Sultan Salah al-Din Ayyubi (Salahuddin) had the mosque renovated and rebuilt in 1179 CE, after conquering Egypt in 1171 CE.

There were seven aisles parallel to the Qiblah, which traversed a little over 300 feet, besides several aisles on the three sides of the court, the bases of whose columns have been excavated in recent years. The ceiling was high and the interior of the mosque was well lighted and aired by windows. On the exterior, between these windows of faintly pointed contours were scalloped half-shells encompassed in shallow niches. Some of the carved woodwork on the west side of the Mosque dates from the ninth century. According to the early Arab historians, the Mosque of Amr Ibn al-Aas had accommodated courses in religion, science and culture since the days of Amr himself. Courses in Islamic religion were held for the general public and for students specializing in Islamic theology. In addition, classes were held for the memorization of the Holy Qur'an and to learn the Arabic language. There were courses for the four Sunni schools of thought: Muhammad Ibn Idris also known as Imam Ash-Shafi'ee gave lectures inside the

mosque after he emigrated to Egypt at the end of 2 AH (8th century CE). There were 110 circles of Sunni theological sciences during the Fatimid period. Other distinguished scholars held lectures in a number of rings inside the mosque.

Nasir Khusraw, a Persian traveler of the Shia sect, who visited Egypt in 1049, in the first half of the Fatimid reign, mentions in his book the Mosque of Amr as a place for teaching sciences and the Holy Qur'an and a meeting place for the citizens of the great metropolis. At no time, in any part of the day, were there less than 5000 persons, consisting of students, professors, foreigners and clerks, seen inside the Mosque. Amr's Mosque also served for drawing out official documents, contracts, and acted as a court for settling religious, commercial, and civil disputes. He wrote in detail about the Mosque of Amr Ibn al-Aas while neglecting Azhar Mosque of the Shia Fatimids, which he mentions casually in the account of his travels. This means that the Mosque of Amr preceded Al-Azhar by nearly 600 years for lessons in Al-Azhar were taught in the beginning of the Mamluk period. During the Fatimid reign, the Shia doctrine was taught to students within the Great Palace of the Fatimid Caliph inside the fortress of Cairo, and not at the Al-Azhar Mosque, as it is commonly believed. And, the oldest religious, scientific and cultural university in the history of the whole world was established in Islamic Egypt in the 1st century AH (7 CE). Thus, the Mosque of Amr held a prominent place in the Arab civilization of Islamic Egypt. Its importance began to decline towards the end of the Mamluk period and after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 CE.

Ahmad Ibn Jubayr the famous Muslim traveler from Spain who visited Cairo on 6th of April 1183 CE in the course of his travels to different Muslim lands makes a brief mention of the Mosque of Amr, in a narrative of his travels. He writes: "In the city of Misr (Old Cairo) is a congregational mosque named after Amr Ibn al-Aas -may Allah hold him in his favor-who has another mosque in Alexandria (named after him), which is a Friday place of worship for the Malikites (a sect of orthodox Sunni Muslims). In Misr too are the remains of the destruction of the fire that occurred...in the year 564 AH (1169 CE). Most of the city has been restored, and buildings now adjoin each other without intermission."

Murad Bey who ruled Egypt in 1212 AH (1797 CE) under the Ottoman era made the last structural alterations to the interiors of the mosque, just before the French invasion of Egypt. He got the eastern arcades of the mosque repositioned so that they were perpendicular to the mihrab wall and had the arches extended to the windows of the mosque. Two minarets built during his time are still in existence. Restoration work on the mosque was carried out during 1906 under the supervision of the Khedive Viceroy Abbas Helmy II. After its reconstruction, the mosque had 150 white marble columns and three minarets. Simple in design, its present plan consists of an open courtyard, which is square in shape with a central fountain for performing ablutions, surrounded by prayer halls of three arcades on either side, with a single arcade on the entrance front, connected to one another on all its sides, and its largest prayer hall with six arcades stretching across the whole width, giving dignity and importance to the prayer space that faces the Qiblah direction.

The Story Of The River Nile

There has never been, and probably never will be, a river so full of romance and history as the River Nile, held sacred in ancient times as the "Father of Egypt."

The Nile has intrigued man's imagination more than any other river in the world. Unrivaled in length in the African continent, the great river is 4145 miles long flowing from beyond Lake Victoria, through more than half the length of Africa, to empty its water in the Mediterranean Sea. During its flow, it twists across dense jungles, haunts of big game, past the mysterious buildings and stone faces of ancient Pharaohs who forged the great civilization of Egypt before joining the sea. On its way, it receives many smaller rivers, the two most important being the Blue Nile and the Atbara or Black Nile.

For centuries, the majestic river defied fearless adventurers in search of its source. No one knows who first began the search. Early records of this quest show that it was a restless Greek Scholar who sailed from his home at Halicarnassus in the Turkish Coast and toured the civilized lands around the Mediterranean. An inquisitive man, Herodotus toured up the Nile all the way to the First Cataract to see what he could "with his own eyes." He recorded in his books a description of the Egyptian temples

and tombs, which he had seen during his travels. Later records show that a Roman expedition sent by Emperor Nero, had abandoned its search midway after trying to find the river's source. The Arabs who came after them gave up their search on the swampy marshlands of Southern Sudan, naming the marshy expanse as "the Barrier."

Not until a century ago, did men probe farther for the river's beginning. Notable among them are the names of Dr. David Livingstone, John Hanning Speke, Richard Francis Burton, Samuel Baker, and Henry Morton Stanley that stand out among the greatest figures of the nineteenth century explorers of Africa, who tried to search for the origin of the River Nile. It was not until 1937, when an obscure German explorer by name Dr. Burkhardt Waldecker ended the search and traced the river's southernmost source to a tiny spring that bubbled out on a lonely summit in Burundi. It was the humble birthplace of the majestic River Nile.

For millenniums, the wisest men of the Egyptian civilization have been mystified by the Nile's annual flood, which watered and enriched its valley, sustaining generations of Egyptians and Sudanese in an otherwise arid land. According to Al-Maqrizi, the fifteenth century Arab historian, when the Arabs conquered Egypt, Amr Ibn al Aas, the Arab general leading the Muslim army was told that the Egyptians were accustomed at the period when the Nile began to rise to deck a young virgin in gay apparel and throw her into the river as a sacrifice to gods in order to obtain a plentiful supply of water to irrigate their crops.

The Arabs soon abolished this barbarous custom; and the Nile in consequence, did not rise in the least degree during the space of nearly three months after the usual period of the commencement of its floods. As a result, the Egyptians became greatly alarmed and approached Amr Ibn al-Aas who was now the Governor of Egypt for advice thinking that a famine would certainly ensue for not carrying out the age-old sacrifice.

It is reported that Amr Ibn al-Aas wrote to Khalifa Umar to inform him what he had done and of the calamity with which Egypt was threatened, seeking his counsel in this matter. Umar Ibn al-Khattab returned a brief answer expressing his appreciation of Amr's conduct and desiring him upon the receipt of his letter, to throw an enclosed note into the Nile. The text of the note ran as follows: From Abdullah, Umar, Commander of the Faithful, to the Nile of Egypt. "If thou flow of thy own accord, flow not: but if it is Allah, the One God, the Mighty, Who causeth thee to flow, we implore Allah, the One and the Mighty to make thee flow." Amr did as he was commanded; and it is recorded that the Nile, rose sixteen cubits in the following night.

The British scientists examining this phenomenon of flooding in the late nineteenth century soon found out that it was the Blue Nile and the Atbara, which were mainly responsible for the yearly floods. The main river collected an enormous amount of water from the great equatorial region around Albert and Victoria Lakes, which passed through a marshy district where a great deal was lost. Added to this, the terrific heat in Upper Sudan caused a high

percentage of water to evaporate. As a result, the Nile reached Khartoum in a constant flow throughout the year. Here it was joined by the Blue Nile that flowed from Lake Tsana, and then by the Atbara. Both these streams flowed through the fertile valley of Ethiopia bringing a rich deposit of red alluvium, during the flood season every year. With never failing regularity the Nile at Aswan would begin to rise in June when the waters were light green in color, and would gradually increase until the middle of October, by which time the river would become a racing flood of reddish tint, owing to the silt carried by it. After October the flood receded to its lowest point once again only to repeat the cycle next June.

This process had continued uninterrupted for thousands of years. The rising waters of Nile would spread all over the valley and submerge the entire area for a period of two months. After that the flood would subside and the water would drain off leaving behind the fertile silt, making the valley fit for the cultivation of crops. As soon as the engineers realized what was happening, they came to the conclusion that it was a terrible waste of having the land irrigated only once a year with so much water to spare. They turned their thoughts at once to a system of artificial irrigation by which they could hold back the excess water generated by the floods in ponds and spreading it across vast tracts of land through the canals, as and when it was needed. Systems of primitive irrigating methods had been in operation for centuries in Egypt, but there was nothing that was attempted on a large scale and naturally a start was made in the richest and most populous part of Egypt, the Nile Delta.

During the early part of the eighteenth century, French engineers had commenced work on a great barrage near Cairo, where the River Nile branched into two. After working on the dam for a couple of years the work was abandoned, but the idea was again revived in 1843. This undertaking was plagued by problems from its start. Work was done hurriedly and the foundations of the barrage were unstable. In 1890, British engineers had to work at strengthening the dam before it became valuable to the people of Egypt. Saeed Pasha who ruled Egypt at that time is believed to have pushed hard on the work because he thought by opening the sluices of the dam he would be able to sweep away any invaders coming to Egypt from the direction of the Mediterranean.

Similar barrages varying in height from thirteen to eighteen feet had been constructed earlier along the Nile at Zifteh, Isna, and Assiut. At each of these places a great canal transported water from the dam through its sluices. From there the water was transferred through smaller canals, decreasing in size and increasing in numbers into the surrounding countryside, ending in small ditches to irrigate the farmlands surrounding the Nile. Since the canals carry a large amount of water through them, it became essential to maintain a large supply of water in reserve throughout the year in barrages built across the Nile. A regular supply of water throughout the year ensured the fertility of the soil for the entire year and as a result the yield of crops went up by leaps and bounds. The successful function of the barrages to this end made it necessary to draw the attention of the engineers to meet the demands of water in Upper Egypt.

A report was commissioned by the government to draw out an estimate as to the amount of water that was needed to irrigate all the cultivable land in both, Upper and Lower Egypt, during the period of low Nile. In the report, it was estimated that twenty-seven million tons of water per day were required for five months of the year, in addition to the normal flow of water. In order to secure this, it would be necessary to construct a dam that was capable of holding no less than 4000 million tons of water! Of all the schemes that were proposed, the best was the construction of a dam at the town of Aswan, at a site where the Nile tumbled over a rocky slope called the First Cataract, which would be capable of holding 2500 million tons of water, and this plan was adopted. No sooner a decision was taken in this regard, a great hue and cry was raised against this proposal by the archeologists because the reservoir that would be created would submerge the prehistoric pharonic temples built on the islands of Philae for five months in a year. After careful deliberations, it was decided to lower the water levels originally proposed by twenty-five feet and this meant that the dam constructed would be capable of storing only 1000 million tons of water.

When the engineers commenced their work, they had a truly tremendous task before them. The hills in the neighborhood of Aswan were made up of red granite and contained ancient quarries from which stone was taken during the construction of the Great Pyramids. And that was the only point in favor of the engineers building the dam, for this would ensure a plentiful supply of stone to the builders. During low water the River Nile ran in five different channels at the site of the dam at a very rapid

pace, and right across these a dam had to be built at a height of 67 feet above the river level.

After the preliminary calculations, the next task for the engineers was to arrange the logistics for carrying out such a huge task. In March 1898, there sprang up such a hive of activity that had never been seen in Egypt since the ancient times when slaves of the Pharaoh dragged along the great stones for the Pyramids. Nearly a whole year was taken for the preliminaries, before a start could be made on the dam itself. During this period the services of a special staff of engineers, headed by Sir William Willcocks and Sir Mudroch Macdonald, skilled in the construction of dams were hired from England, huts and offices were erected for the workers of the dam, railway lines were laid to carry cargo to the site, and thousands of workers were taken into service, along with hundreds of skilled masons from Italy who were brought to the site. Finally, everything that was needed to begin the work on the dam was in place to start the construction.

First the engineers had to find a firm bed of rock on which the massive dam could rest, and although the work on the islands between the channels was comparatively simple, the problem was how to excavate in the beds of the channels through which the water ran so swiftly. An additional complication was that no work could be carried for seven months in a year while the river was in flood. After much deliberation, it was decided that temporary dams had to be built below the site of the dam-or "sudds" as they are called in Egypt- to pump out water and free the ground for the construction of the dam. By tipping

great stones over the end of the channels the engineers managed to close four of them on the downstream side during the flood season. As soon as the work could be resumed after the flood, suds were commenced, by piling an enormous number of bags filled with granite sand across the channels. This work progressed rapidly, and when the four channels were safely cut off, pumping was commenced, which rapidly cleared the water.

As soon as the channel beds were uncovered, the workmen were directed to remove from the surface all the loose stones and boulders. Further excavation work had to be done before a firm base could be found. Pickaxes and dynamite were used to clear all the unsound rocks in the area. While this was proceeding, additional suds were commenced across the remaining channel. The annual flood of the River Nile again stopped work on the dam, but not before 800,000 cubic yards of material had been cleared and the foundation for the dam was laid in all but the western channel. By the year 1901, work on the great dam was being carried round the clock and at great speed. Despite the intense heat, workmen toiled relentlessly at clearing the ground and placing the stone in the heart of the dam, while the Italian masons were ready with their trowels on the other side to cement the great squared blocks. However, the construction of the dam was not easy as building a solid block of wall. Great sluice openings measuring 6 feet 6 inches wide, numbering 180 had to be left in the wall, 140 of them at a height of 23 feet and the other forty at 12 feet 6 inches. This meant that the dam had to be solid to just above the level of the riverbed, pierced by great openings for the next twenty-three feet,

and solid again for the remainder of its height, except that a space had to be left for the sluice gates to move in. So rapidly did the work progress that before the flood came again, the great dam had been raised to a height of nearly fifty feet above the riverbed.

In the year 1902, work on the dam progressed smoothly and after five months of painstaking effort the great work was completed by May 1902. The official opening of the dam took place the following December, when the Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi Pasha, opened five of the great sluice gates to allow pent-up water to rush through the river. The work on the dam had cost over five million pounds. It had swallowed over a million tons of granite, 75000 tons of cement and 6400 tons of steel work. The sluice gates constructed into the dam were considered to be marvels of engineering for each of them was capable of being worked with ease, although, at the lowest level of water it has a pressure of 200 tons against it! During the season when the Nile is in flood, more than 15000 tons of water passes through its sluices every second. The gates were left open in flood time, so that water from the Nile could move through it freely and convey its life-giving silt to the lower reaches of the land. As the flood diminished the gates were closed to store up the required amount of water to be used at a later date.

Gigantic as the work was, it soon became necessary to improvise upon the existing work. The surging torrents of the River Nile sweeping through the sluices had begun to scour out the riverbed forming a deep hollow in it near the base of the dam. The engineers feared that this in turn

would affect the stability of the foundation of the dam and it was soon decided to cut out all the defective and loose rocks at the foot of the dam, and a huge slope of granite blocks provided as a protection to the river bed so that the water running through the sluices is carried forward by 200 feet until it reaches the original riverbed. This work required an additional 350,000 tons of masonry and the cost of building it came to nearly 350,000 pounds.

Although, the huge reservoir formed by the dam was completed in the year 1902, and the water stored in it allocated to the surrounding regions by the end of 1903, it became soon apparent to the British engineers working on the dam that it was not sufficient to meet the needs of the farming community of the Nile Delta, and there was an urgent need to increase the height of the dam. In 1907, Sir Benjamin Baker, one of the engineers working on the dam was given the task of designing an addition to the reservoir that would increase its capacity by 2250 million tons. The problem of increasing the height of the dam and strengthening it to hold two-times as much water was one of the most difficult problems ever solved by the dam construction engineers.

The dam had to be raised by 16 feet, and the depth of the water behind it by 23 feet. And, the construction of the dam required the structure to be thickened as well as raised simultaneously. Sir Benjamin's design left a space of 6 inches between the new wall of the dam and the original wall with the two joined together by a number of steel rods. The rods bearing the weight of the new face allowed room for cementing the dam. After the front

portion was built in the year 1907-09 the gap was filled with cement mortar, and the two walls of the dam were bound together to make a solid whole. During 1910-12 the heightening of the dam was carried out, and ten years after the opening of the original structure the enlarged dam was brought into use. The additional work had incurred a cost 1,500,000 pounds and used up 400,000 tons of masonry, so that the dam as a whole contained nearly two millions ton!

In the year 1929, the Government of Egypt again set up an International Commission comprising of an American, a Swiss and a British Engineer to advise it on the feasibility of further heightening the dam to increase its capacity to hold water and to recommend the most suitable design for the purpose. In its report the Commission informed that the dam could safely be raised by another 29 feet 6 inches; and the level of the reservoir increased by 26 feet. Work on the new scheme was commenced early in 1931, and carried on without interruption towards the end of 1933. The dam was now 6987 feet long compared to 6428 feet in 1902, and its maximum height was 174 feet compared with the 128 feet of the original structure. The raising of the dam made it necessary for the construction of 90 new sluices, and in addition, the reconstruction of the remainder. The reservoir formed by the heightened dam now held about 5000 million tons of water, and incurred a cost of ten million pounds.

The River Nile had been tamed but only partially. While the raising of the Aswan dam was in progress, a barrage similar to those at Assiut and Isna but capable of holding a

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much greater amount of water was constructed at Nag Hamadi, and opened in 1930. On the other side of Egypt the water from the river first passed through Sudan and it was decided that Sudan should also reap some of the benefit from the River Nile. However, the Egyptians were apprehensive that any work on a dam in Sudan would affect Egypt's supply of water from the Nile. But the fears of the government were allayed when it was pointed out that an enormous quantity of water was wasted in the middle of July when Egypt had all the water she could use and the rest was passed into the sea. Experiments also showed that during the months of February to October, the Egyptian period of cultivation, the climate in Sudan was too hot for cotton growing, but crops could be sown in July and picked in the month of February or March with every success.

A scheme was, therefore, prepared for impounding the waters of the Blue Nile to irrigate the Gezirah (island) region, which lies between the Blue Nile and the White Nile just south of Khartoum by the aid of a dam across the Blue Nile at Sennar, 2000 miles from the mouth of the Nile. This dam was first suggested around 1904 by Sir William Garstin, one of the pioneers of Egyptian Irrigation Service and the champions of the project. Work on the dam commenced before the First World War-although plans were drawn for it much earlier-but was abandoned soon after. The construction was continued after hostilities ceased and the Sennar Dam was officially opened on 21st January 1926.

In order to build the Sennar Dam, the river was

temporarily diverted by means of suddes, first to the western channel and then to the eastern channel. The great dam built was nearly two miles long and 120 feet high and it took over a million tons of stone brought from 20 miles to the site. Its base was 90 feet thick and tapered to 15 feet at the top. Around 20,000 men were employed to do the job and the workforce was made up of both Egyptians and Sudanese nationals, along with 350 skilled Egyptian masons. Other workers hired to work on the dam were from Arab countries on the other side of the Red Sea, Nigeria and French Congo. A hundred thousand tons of cement, and 3500 tons of steelwork were placed in the dam, which holds back the water for a distance of 58 miles.

Eighty main sluices, 14 canal sluices and 112 spillways were constructed into the dam and the water stored would be used later to irrigate 460,000 acres of land without taking any water supply that was required for the needs of Egypt. The only water that was stored being that of which would otherwise be emptied by the Nile into the Mediterranean Sea. The cost of the whole project was around ten million pounds.

An agreement was made in 1928 that gave the Egyptian Government the right to control the waters of the Nile outside Egypt, and as a result work commenced in 1933 on a dam at Jabal Aulija in the Sudan, 20 miles south of Khartoum. As the White Nile Valley from south of Khartoum was extremely flat, it was possible to impound a great volume of water by a dam of modest height. Work on the dam was started in November 1933 and was

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completed in April 1937. The completed dam was the longest in the Egyptian system. The reservoir that was created by the construction of the dam was 187 miles long. The four miles wide in parts had been formed and the dam was capable of holding 3000 million tons of water. Its purpose was to pass on water to Aswan and serve the same purpose as if the capacity of the Aswan reservoir was increased again.

Still more colossal projects for conserving the Nile's waters became inevitable due to meeting the needs of the ever-growing population of Egypt. The stage was set for building the Aswan High Dam when the old dam overflowed in the year 1946. The engineers monitoring the dam decided that instead of raising the dam for the time, it would be better to build another one with a larger capacity six kilometers from the original dam. Planning for the dam started in the year 1952, after Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power in Egypt, and at first the United States offered to fund its construction with a loan of \$270 million. Bids for construction of the dam were invited from British, French and German firms. When the aid offer was withdrawn in the year 1956, after Egypt formally recognized the People's Republic of China, Nasser decided to proceed with its construction with the help of the revenues earned through the ships passing through the Suez Canal.

By then, the Soviet Union struggling to increase its zone of influence in Africa during the Cold War offered to help in the construction of the dam and agreed to finance it on the condition that only Soviet equipment and engineering

methods were used in the construction of the dam. The Russian Zuk Hydro-project Institute designed the enormous rock and clay dam that was built and later called the Sadd al-Aali Dam. More than 800 Soviet engineers and technicians were sent to the site to guide the work. But, Sadd al-Aali was not destined to be an entirely Russian dam. The workforce of 30,000 at the dam included men from many nations, among them Finland, Switzerland, India, Ghana, Canada, Argentina and the United States. Equipment to the site also came from different parts of the world: bulldozers from USA, excavators from Britain and Swedish rock drills.

Construction on the High Dam started in the year 1960. The High Dam, Al Saad al-Aali with its grand display of stone and steel was completed on July 20, 1970. The dam was 3600 meters long, 980 meters at its base, and had a room for a highway 40 meters wide along its crest and is 111 meters tall. Its first stage finished in the year 1964 and the reservoir was filled in 1964 when the dam was still being constructed. It became Egypt's biggest, most colossal monument that was ever built since the construction of the Great Pyramids of the ancient times. According to estimates, the dam holds 55 million cubic yards of material-masonry, rock and steel- enough for constructing 17 Great Pyramids. The Aswan dam had increased Egypt's cultivable land by 30% and created a reservoir of water so vast that it could hold Egypt's water supply for a number of years so that the Nile could be regulated during its high or low annual flood at all times. And, it also created Lake Nasser, the world's largest man-made lake, which raised the water table in the Sahara as far as Algeria. The

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generators at the hydroelectric power station at the Sadd al-Aali-the Aswan High dam- are capable of spinning out ten billion kilowatt hours of electricity annually to power industry in Egypt and allowed for the connection of most Egyptian villages to electricity for the first time.

Unfortunately, all these advances came with a price. Water impounded by the Aswan High Dam would submerge some of Egypt's chief tourist attractions, the prehistoric temples at Abu Simbel, and the government looked for ways to save the two temples there. Suggestions came cheap, but the price tags came as high as 90 million dollars. The engineers had to move two temples literally carved out of the living rock of a mountainside. The front portion of the temple with its four colossal figures, the sandstone portrait of Ramases II stood 110 feet high, and 125 feet high. The Great Hall, wide rooms, and inner sanctuaries burrowed 200 feet into the mountain. And, the other temple a shrine to Nefertari was small by comparison: 40 by 90 feet from the outside and 70 feet from the entrance to the back wall. Early proposals at saving these monuments called for cutting each temple out in one gigantic piece and raising it to the top of the cliff to its new site, about the height of a 19-story building. The U.A.R considered this, and wisely tossed the problem to the world, through UNESCO. An intensive fund-raising campaign began, and more ideas to save the temples were solicited. By then the first stage of the dam was nearing completion and the water levels in it were rising by the day. Forced to a decision the UNESCO and U.A.R accepted a Swedish plan: carve the monuments into manageable blocks, haul them a block at a time, and

resemble them at the cliff-top, at a cost of 36 million dollars.

Ever since prehistoric times, Egypt had been overtaken by famine, due to the Nile not rising sufficiently to flood the land. During those years the Egyptians had suffered from Low Nile and crop failure. Until the middle of nineteenth century the River Nile had been left to chart out its own path, and Egypt was entirely at its mercy unable to check its flow. Today, the people of Egypt can look back with pride upon the harnessing of the Nile and the outstanding contributions made by the dams to the material progress of Egypt. Above all, the great dams of Egypt are now capable of parceling out water saved from the fat years to nourish the lean.

The Treasures Of Tunisia

Today, Tunisia is situated at a key point in the Western Mediterranean, stretching outwards to Sicily. The country of Tunisia derives its sense of nationhood from the awareness about the greatness of its past, and continuing traditions, dominated by the Religion of Islam from the past fourteen centuries, from a common language Arabic, and a sense of a way of life that has evolved under its own unique culture, enjoying a self-confidence that is free from strife caused by internal tribal divisions, diversity of languages, and remains free from arrogant, self-destructive pride of nationalism. Tunisians have achieved unity of a nation in a way the others have not. Its past greatness is obvious throughout Tunisia, the great managements that do much to enhance the greatness and self-respect of any nation. They are not considered, as memorials of an antique Tunisian state, for such a state did not exist in the past.

The site of ancient Carthage is one such monument that has been inherited by the modern Tunisian state. It stands shorn of all its former greatness that once made an important outpost of the former Phoenician empire, and a formidable rival to imperial Rome before it was burnt into

ashes. Carthage continues to evoke grandeur and splendor partly because of a splendid cathedral built by the French occupying forces, and to some extent because of the Presidential palace built by the side of the ruins of the Antonine baths near the seashore. Nevertheless, this was the site, which had witnessed a fair share of warfare between the ancient powers of the past, between the Phoenicians and the Roman empires of the past, and a mute witness to the tales of cruelty, greed, and the lust for power that existed between the two superpowers, which sought dominance over the others, in the past. At present, Carthage excites the interest of those in the world, because of its role played in the history of the world, for adventurers, sightseeing tourists, and archeologists, at other times serious research scholars who travel from far and wide to witness first hand its remains to experience first hand its greatness, as it must have existed since days of old.

The grace of Roman occupation of Carthage is still seen preserved in its mosaics and murals, in the spectacular ruins of Thuborbo Majus, Sbeitla and Al Djem. However, the monuments that are closer to modern Tunisia are those of Islam, the grandest of them all is the Mosque of Kairouan. The Tunisians consider the mosque with the same importance that the other historical objects of the ancient past left by the Phoenicians, Roman and Byzantine ruins and are regarded as a legacy of an earlier Tunisian state. The grandeur of the ancient ruins made a permanent impact, and have contributed in large measure to enhance the temporary success, independence, and empires of the Arab rulers who came after them to excel them on a scale, which would leave the Islamic civilization to which Tunisia

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belongs, with its own monuments, in which it can claim a pride of place in the Islamic world, and enhance the prestige and importance in the Islamic empires of the past. In the present times, extensive restoration and rebuilding of Tunisian monuments is taking place rapidly to give the Tunisians a sense of identity of their own in relationship with the legacy left to them by the past by the ancient ancestors.

The French occupation of Tunisia left them without any spectacular monuments of their own, except for those built for their own use. They include proper roads, port installations, post offices and stations. The great cathedrals built by them stand empty and they are used today as museums. French buildings dominate the countryside, and the red-tiled roofs of the white Arab houses can be easily distinguished from them, as they stand by their side. The larger houses built by the French remain largely unoccupied. Nonetheless, they form an important feature of the infrastructure of a modern nation, and after wresting independence from Colonial rule left it with a prolonged defense and established frontiers. After liberating themselves with a minimal use of force from imperial rule they do not lack self-confidence or feel deep bitterness against their former foes. Tunisians speak with pride about their local monuments, from which they draw their national identity.

There are no racial or tribal divisions in the Tunisian society. The advent of Islam, and the subsequent Arab conquest were so complete that the Berber society adopted the Arabic language as their own with the same enthusiasm,

which makes them a part of the Arab world stretching from the Atlantic to the Arabian Gulf, although there are some differences in the Arabic dialects spoken by the people of North Africa. French is also spoken, read, and understood widely. However, from the year 1956, it was gradually replaced in stages by the Arabic language, and efforts are underway for the complete Arabization of Tunisia, with Arabic taught as a medium of instruction in its schools, and the two languages continue to coexist in the cities and partly in the countryside.

Among the natural treasures of Tunisia are its mountains, which rise to nearly five thousand feet at its highest peak and are located at the northeast of the country. The mountains are strategically located to attract maximum rainfall and are covered with trees, which include cork oak; the Medjerda River, which rises from Algeria, waters the central plains. The climate is ideal for the farming of olive trees, and its coastal shelf provides it with a rich haul of sponges, and a huge harvest of fish. The fishes are brought into a string of fishing harbors, and then to the commercial seaports of Sousse and Sfax. The Climate and landscape change abruptly as one travels inland from the Sahel, which gives rise to a dense thicket to trees and houses into the plains of Central Tunisia to the site of the Great Mosque. The visual effect of the Great Mosque of Kairouan is enhanced as it stands aloft like a great guiding light, surrounded by sparsely populated eucalyptus trees, and sands that drift across the road. These eucalyptus trees in turn provide shelter for pistachios and other fruit trees.

The Mosque of Kairouan regards itself as the guardian of the religious heritage of Islamic Maghreb. Its Ulama are supported by a devout population, which passionately guards any attempts by the governmental machineries into making inroads in the domain of the Religion of Islam, and are opposed to all change, which may put it in direct conflict with the principles outlined in the Islamic Shariah. The Government - on its road to modernization - headed first by Bourguiba has wisely distanced from encroaching upon this domain of the cradle of Islam in Tunisia.

The Muslim rule of Tunisia began with the arrival of Arab armies, though small in number, ranged from Egypt into Cyrenaica and Fezzan, then westwards into Tripoli. The Arab armies headed by Ibn Sa'ad first arrived in the year 647 CE and easily defeated the Berber army ranged against them, which was headed by the Byzantine Patriarch Gregory. The next major incursion occurred after the establishment of the Umayyad Dynasty of Damascus, when Mu'awiyah Ibn Hajjaj led the Arab expedition for establishing Arab rule in Tunisia. The last expedition was headed by Uqba Ibn Nafi in the year 670 CE, this time with the object of permanently entrenching firmly a lasting permanent rule over all of Tunisia. It was he, who first camped at this place with his army - in Arabic this place came to be known as Qairawan.

From 670 CE until the end of the next century, Qairawan remained a garrison city and it became a center of Arab rule in Berber territory. The Arabs were still few in number, to establish an effective government over Arab tribes. They could undertake extensive raids but were vulnerable to

attacks. It is recorded that Uqba led an expedition across northwest Africa to the Atlantic coast, and according to reports asked Allah to witness that the sea prevented him from going further. But he was over-extended. Berber and Byzantine resistance under the leadership of an obscure leader named Kusaila brought the defeat of his forces, and his own death at Tahoudaha. His burial place - Sidi Uqba - became a shrine of pilgrimage. Meanwhile Kusaila in a reckless attempt tried to enter Qairawan, only to suffer a reversal of fortunes and was decisively defeated by the other Arabs stationed at the garrison, and met the same fate as Sidi Uqba, three years later in 686 CE.

The Berber resistance then passed into the hands of a Jewish woman, popularly known as "Kahina" or the "prophetess." Her name is unknown; according to Ibn Khaldun she professed Judaism, and her influence extended all over the North African countries. But the Arabs grew steadily stronger, and after defeating the Byzantines in 695 CE conquered Carthage under the leadership of Hussain Ibn al-Numan al-Ghassani, and recaptured the city in 698 CE. Soon after his victory, he built a new port at Tunis to protect themselves from sea raids. Against Kahina, they were victorious, in a battle that took place near Tabraka. Hassan set about establishing a settled system of government, exacting taxes and extending his rule westwards. He knocked down Sidi Uqba's mosque at Qairawan and in its place built another, brining marble pillars from Carthage to embellish his work.

At the same time, momentous changes were taking place in other parts of the Islamic world. The Muslim world

became divided into two camps over the succession of Ali, the son-in-law of the Holy Prophet and Amir Mu'awiyah in Damascus who refused to pledge allegiance to his rule. The Battle of Siffin saw the emergence of a powerful extreme puritanical Muslims known as Kharijites, with their own ideology about the rule of the Caliphs who they believed should be the elected head of the Islamic state. In 756 CE, this group became powerful enough to spread into different parts of the Arab world and sacked Qairawan, so that the citizens had to take refuge out of the town. In Baghdad, the Abbasids who were known firmly in the seat of power dispatched, the Governor of Egypt, Ibn Ash'ath to vanquish the Kharijites and free Qairawan. After a series of campaign the power of the Kharijites was completely defeated in Tunisia, and resulted in establishing Ibrahim Ibn Aghlab, as the regional governor who took the title of an Amir and ruled independently of Egypt, a rule which lasted undisturbed throughout the ninth century and extended a little beyond the boundaries of modern Tunisia.

Qairawan became the capital of the Aghlabid Amirs. At this time the city enjoyed its period of great splendor. The great mosque was once again rebuilt and made twice as big, and constructed in the fashion with the architectural pattern that was in fashion in the other parts of the Islamic empire. It has four hundred and fourteen columns dividing the single great prayer hall into seventeen aisles. It was an impressive moving structure with a wide spacious court on the outside, and a great minaret built on the other side in three stages. Then, as now, it dominated the surrounding plains, raising above the low buildings of the town and the

smaller minarets of innumerable other mosques, a single tall edifice, set in a harsh landscape. Other mosques were built at Qairawan, including the Mosque of the Three Doors, so was Zaitouna Mosque in Tunis and others at Sousse and Sfax.

Montassir too enjoyed a golden age under the Aghlabids. For this was a period of great theological discussions and intense devotions. The ribat (retreat for Arabic scholars) was the first to be founded in the Arab West. Another ribat was built along the coast of Sousse, and they were the centers of those Muslims who wanted to adopt a disciplined, austere, and an ascetic religious life, which was completely devoted to the learning of Islamic theology. They also acted as army installations, defensive fortresses, and in the case of Sousse - the departure point of military expeditions.

At the beginning of the tenth century, the Aghlabids completed the conquest of Sicily. The occupation of Sicily was surpassed by the achievements of the dynasty of its own society. Qairawan became the chief center of learning and devotion of the Islamic world. Legal debates were joined with the theological. It was at this time the Maliki School of Islamic thought was established throughout North Africa. A group of scholars at the Qairawan Mosque interpreted the Maliki School of Thought and held it less austere than the doctrines followed by the Hanafi School of Thought and ensured its predominance.

But the achievements of the Aghlabid dynasty were insufficient to ensure the continuity of its rulers. In the tenth century the Aghlabid Empire collapsed before the

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onslaught of the Shiite Fatimid rulers before they established their rule in Egypt. In the middle of the eleventh century a Berber Unitarian Ibn Tumart, and later, his successor Abdul-Mumin invaded Tunisia, and extended their conquest to the eastern coast of Tunisia. For a brief time the whole of Muslim northwest Africa and southern Spain was brought under the rule of Almohads. The Almohad Empire lasted until 1268, and they appointed governors to rule the conquered territories, and soon one of the governors by name Abdul Wahid Ibn Abu Hafs declared his independence and established the Hafsid Dynasty, which ruled Tunisia for the next three centuries.

Tunis became the capital of the Hafsid Dynasty and an important port city. They carried extensive trade with European countries. Tunis soon became the refuge of the Arabs from Spain and the other parts of the Islamic empire for the Abbasid Caliphate collapsed under the onslaught of the Mongols in 1258 CE, and as a result the capital city grew richer with the influx of refugees, giving its society a new brilliance and buildings of fresh beauty. In the meantime, the Christian states of France launched a crusade under St. Louis and his brother Charles against Tunis to wrest control of the empire from the Muslim rule and fought two indecisive battles, which led to the defeat of the Muslim armies under Caliph Al-Muntasir. However, the crusaders lacked the energy and resources to push inward to establish their rule in Tunis and withdrew after exacting a tribute from the Muslim ruler as the Christian camp was plagued with a dysentery epidemic. St. Louis died of this epidemic and was buried at Carthage. However, according to Tunisian folklore he did not die but was converted into Islam and

led the rest of his life as a Muslim holy man, and was known popularly as Sidi Bou Saeed.

During these turbulent times there lived in Tunisia the great historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun - a man whose contribution to human thought is invaluable and is remembered even on to this day with pride by the Tunisians. He had held political office under different kings and had a sharp mind with an aptitude for learning that led him to write his scholarly work *Al-Muqaddimah*, which was his introduction to the history of the world "*Kitab al-Ibar*", in which he discusses "the science of culture" and that meant a study of human social behavior in the changing periods of world history. While in Damascus, the Mongol army of Timur had besieged the city, and his fame as a scholar had reached the famous conqueror, and he eagerly sought his company. After lowering himself from the walls of the city, Ibn Khaldun made his way into the Mongol camp and spent thirty-five days as his guest, and was later allowed to depart to Cairo along with his companions in peace.

In the year 1494, the North African countries came under the Ottoman rule, a few years after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the armies of Sulayman, the magnificent. The ports and coasts of Tunisia became the frontline between Spain and its allies and the Turks. By 1660, the Ottoman rulers managed to secure a complete hold over the entire region of North Africa, after a series of battles with the Christian forces with varying results. The Ottoman Turks initially appointed a Pasha as a governor supported by a military force. The Tunisians,

nominally, nominally under Turkish rule, prospered under the rule of Turks and carried extensive trade along the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It exported woolen covers, olive oil, lemons, wheat and Morocco leather, as well as dates, hides, wax, soaps and caps.

In the year 1881, Tunisia was occupied by the imperialistic France, determined on conquest of North Africa and Tunis and made it into a French protectorate, and entered into an uneasy alliance with the Tunisians. On the other side of the border, the French started on a lengthy colonial war with Algeria and Morocco to establish political control of North Africa until the end of the Second World War. Meanwhile, the leader of the nationalist movement Habib Bourguiba was championing the cause of Tunisian independence at home and abroad, traveling across different countries seeking their support. Finally in the year 1955, he managed to negotiate the terms for Tunisia's internal sovereignty with France, and a year later this agreement was quickly followed by complete independence from French rule from March 1956 with little bloodshed and with the cooperation from France.

Part:1

Petra And Palmyra - The Lost Cities Of The Desert

Once upon a time, two great cities flourished in the desert. One of them was hidden in rocks of a mountain and the other stood out in the open desert. Nobody knew about the existence of these cities in recorded history from the outside world until they were discovered at the beginning of modern times, when they were accidentally discovered by explorers who chanced upon their splendid ruins during their travels in the desert. These ruins speak eloquently about the vast wealth and power of the long-dead citizens of these two cities. Where did the wealth come from that enabled the people of these two cities to live their lives in luxury, and the leisure to build magnificent cities, the likes of which have been never seen in this world? The splendid ruins of these two wonderful cities are now being coaxed by the spade to give up their long-held secrets. And, the spade is slowly revealing the amazing history of the two nations, which were ranked among the most powerful nations of the world during their times.

The city of Petra stands in the Jordanian desert, and lies in a valley that runs from the Gulf of Aqabah to the Red Sea, in the middle of the massive mountain of Petra,

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The city of Petra stands in the Jordanian desert, and lies in a valley that runs from the Gulf of Aqabah to the Red Sea, in the middle of the massive mountain of Petra,

shut away from the prying eyes of the outside world. At first sight, one will find the city to be unapproachable. In order to travel to the ruins of Petra, one has to go through a narrow crevice in the rocks, and the passage will turn and twist downhill for a mile getting narrower as people travel through it, with rocks bearing down menacingly from every side on the traveler, blocking out the sun. Then, just as the traveler has given up all hope of seeing the city, he will catch the first glimpse of the enormous, imposing columns carved into the mountain rock through an opening at the edge of the passage. Suddenly, the traveler will emerge into bright light to stand before a breathtaking, awesome sight of a huge city, of enormous houses and buildings all carved into the walls of the mountainside. At first sight, the traveler is deceived into believing that he has come across an old Roman City that has long been forgotten by the outside world over the passage of time. But, on closer examination, he finds though the architecture of the enormous city resembles Roman architecture, there is an elaborate detail in its settings, which is not found among the ruins of the other great cities of the world. Moreover, the city stands in the hollow of a mountain mass in an isolated valley in Jordan, totally out of the place and out of its time.

According to the archeologists working in this city, the fantastic buildings in the extraordinary city of Petra were probably built and inhabited sometime in the first and second century before the Common Era. One of the large buildings in the city was perhaps, the Treasury, because of a sculptured urn that stands on its top, which is believed to be filled with gold. In fact, this belief is so powerful that

the urn is completely covered by bullet holes by treasure hunters seeking to acquire it.

Beyond the Treasury, is another narrow valley, which leads a visitor to the main city of Petra, which is filled with hundreds of buildings, temples and tombs. Some of the buildings appear plain, whereas, the others are decorated with obelisks, pillars and cornices all done up in a variety of styles, which project out from the rock. This lost city withstood the ravages of time over the centuries, with the wind blowing across the desert carrying the sand particles, destroying the details of the carvings done on the buildings from the outside, but this is compensated by the splendid hue of colors in which the city is seen in different times of the day. From the distance, the city looks pink in color, but on approaching it, the buildings take on a golden or a light purple color, which appear as if they are painted by master-artists with large brushes dripping in bright colors across a huge oil canvas, in drawings of huge buildings and carved pillars.

Petra was unknown to the world for nearly a thousand years, except perhaps the nomadic Bedouin tribesmen passing that way, until it was discovered by Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, a Swiss-born explorer who had set out alone on a journey through Arab lands in 1809, after studying Arabic to map this uncharted territory and unlock its secrets to the outside world. In order to make his travel easy in the Arab lands, and partly because of his genuine attraction to the Muslim way of life and its culture, he disguised himself as an Arab and took an assumed name of Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah. He had in his studies acquired a good

knowledge of Islam and its rituals and followed them scrupulously to avoid suspicion and detection as a non-Muslim among the Arab tribes. He had earlier spent two years in Syria, visiting some of its ancient ruins and cities, and on his way to Palestine, he first heard of an amazing city hidden deep among the mountains of the Jordan valley. The Arabs believed this city belonged to the people of Prophet Aaron (Harun) the brother of Prophet Moses (Musa) and his tomb was located near the ancient city veiled to the outside world.

Intrigued, he declared his intention of making a sacrifice at the tomb of the Prophet Harun to his guide, which he knew was near the site of the ruins. His guides, after some persuasion, agreed to lead him to this place. Making their way across the hostile desert, Burckhardt along with his goat and the guide advanced through the valley that led to the city of Petra. At the first sight Burckhardt was wonderstruck at the magnificent splendor of the city. However, he overcame his awe at the sight before him, and paused to examine several monuments in the city, covertly taking notes and making sketches in a notebook that he carried with him. By the time, he reached to foot of the mountain that contained the Prophet's tomb, it was dark, and he had to sacrifice the goat and returned to the camp without making the climb to the top.

Burckhardt's book was published in the year 1822, five years after his death in Egypt. However, before the publication of his book the city of Petra had been rediscovered by other European explorers, and their finding created a sensation in the West. Soon, Petra became a

favorite destination to the tourists, adventurers, and serious scholars. To the archeologists, the city was a fascinating puzzle from the year 1929 onwards, for the architecture of the buildings in rock showed the influence of the ancient buildings found in Syria, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Since 1958, more serious works done by British excavators in Petra have revealed the extraordinary culture and history of the people who once inhabited this place.

The Nabateans are credited for building the city of Petra. However, before them, this area was occupied by other people known as Edomites who were continuously on hostile terms with the other neighboring states. They occupied an important part of the region, which was on the crossroads of several important trade routes and profited from the trade caravans that passed their way. It is believed that the Edomites were defeated by the Jews under King Solomon, and their rule extended to this area for the next two hundred years. Later, the Babylonians conquered the Jews and led them into captivity. The Edomites who had been expelled from this area started to move in to reoccupy the former lands, which were under their control. However, this area was again invaded, this time by the Nabateans, a nomadic, pastoral tribe of Arab origins. They integrated easily with the Edomites in this area to lead a more settled life. By the year 300 BCE, the Nabateans appeared to gain a complete control of this area and constructed for themselves the first urban settlement by carving their living quarters, buildings, and tombs in the rocks of the nearby mountains. At the peak of their prosperity in the 1st century BCE, the city of Petra had as many as 30,000 living in it. They were governed by a king

from 168 BCE and formed a democratic state, where the king was held accountable for his actions.

Water was scarce in this region and it was highly prized. The chief deity of this city was Al Uzza, the goddess of springs and water. The Nabateans used the water available to them ingeniously to farm the surrounding desert lands and developed Petra into an oasis throughout the year. They spoke a language that was similar to Aramaic. They produced beautiful pottery and splendid architecture, some of which was influenced after the Roman style. By the first century, the city of Petra became again a center of trade because of the continuous wars fought between Egypt and Syria until the Nabateans became rich to extend their control to the north of Damascus. As they became rich, the style of living improved, which was reflected by the rich decorations on the tombs of some Nabateans. One of the buildings that excelled all others in its grandeur, elegance and majesty was Deir, the Monastery, which was 138 feet high and cut deeply into mountain rocks, with a large plain before it to conduct their religious rituals, which had elements of animal and human sacrifice in it.

By the year 106 CE, the Romans had annexed Petra and it became a Roman province. In the past, the Nabateans had made rich profits from Roman trade with India and Arabia that was conducted in their lands. After conquering Petra, the trade routes came under Roman control. The Romans started constructing their own buildings in Petra, and provided the city with an amphitheater that had room for 4000 spectators and constructed a temple - Kasr al Bint - the only free standing structure in the heart of the city

where the marketplace was located. It was here, the caravans from the East traded with others in the West in spices, ivory, amber, and bales of cloth. Petra continued to be an important trading center for the next two centuries. However, its importance waned steadily with the other cities such as Palmyra in the north which started attracting trade. Gradually, the merchants left and along with them left the Roman legions whose duty was to guard the trade routes. After the Roman Empire converted into Christianity, the city of Petra acquired a bishop and a few of its buildings were converted into churches. But the city - ruled from Byzantium - had lost its earlier significance and left to its own devices. -

Before the arrival of Muslim rule in the seventh century, the city of Petra was struck by a severe earthquake causing the few inhabitants to desert the city completely. But, with the absence of a clear record of Nabatean history, it will forever remain a mystery to understand the significance of some of the ruins in the city of Petra, and the secrets of building this city at this particular spot will make it impossible for anybody to unravel the mystique that surrounds this city.

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Petra And Palmyra - The Lost Cities Of The Desert

Three hundred miles to the north of the city of Petra stands the city of Palmyra, which is now completely in ruins. In contrast to Petra, this city stands on open ground and is visible for miles in the open desert, about 140 miles east of Damascus. Its columns and colonnades and many of the skeletons of vanished buildings stand as a sentinel against the raging wind of desert sand. Travelers to the city have been overwhelmed for centuries by the huge magnificent ruins of the city.

Most of Palmyra's magnificence can be traced back to the second century of the Common Era, when it had reached its peak and prosperity as a trading center. However, recent records of excavations have traced its history to nearly 2000 BCE, when this city was an oasis called Tadmor, which was the original name for Palmyra from the Romans who had occupied this city. For thousands of years, this area was occupied by the Arab nomadic tribes who had adopted this area to lead a settled way of life. In time, they adopted the language of the Aramaeans, another Semitic tribe of Arab origins. For many

centuries, the city of Palmyra was a modest and a prosperous town. Later, the Roman and Greek influences in the first century CE transformed this sleepy town, and gave it a grandeur, which can be seen among its remains in the present day. With the growth of long-distance trade the city began attracting traders from Persia, India and China to the east and the Phoenicians from the west. Traders could do business at this mutually convenient meeting point in ivory, spices, silk, gold and jewels saving both on time and money. The people of Palmyra levied a tax on the traders and offered them a place to carry on their trade and provided them with fresh water and accommodation, which in turn, added to their prosperity. In fact, the city of Palmyra became the first and foremost as a "nation of shopkeepers."

Some idea of their wealth can be gleaned by the rich adornments worn by the women of Palmyra and the amount of wealth lavished on decorating the tombs of the dead, which clearly belonged to the rich in the city. Others were buried in desert graves marked with simple headstones. The most imposing feature of the city is the Great Colonnade, which was built in the 2nd CE. It consisted of more than seven hundred columns, measuring 29 feet in height, crowned with intricate designed heads, formed the main thoroughfare of the city, which was lined with shops and trading offices.

Near the end of the colonnades stand the ruins of a great temple of Bel, the supreme deity of Palmyra. Here, the priests sacrificed animals to the idols of greater and lesser deities kept in the temple and held regular feasts in

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their honor. The city continued to thrive under Roman patronage for a time, which continued to add to its prosperity. However, by the middle of third century CE, Syria was invaded by Persia, and successfully blocked all trade routes to Palmyra. The citizens of Palmyra were left with no choice but to come to terms with the enemy or fight them without Roman help. At this point in time, a leading Senator of Palmyra, Odenathus, entered the scene to deal with the crisis. He tried to buy peace with the Persians but all his attempts at doing so, were rebuffed by the Persians. In the end, he set about the task of raising an army to fight the Persians and enlisted recruits from all over Syria and fashioned them into a disciplined army. Then, he took on the might of the Persians and defeated them, and declared himself the King of Palmyra. With his help, Rome regained its influence in the Middle East and recognized the Palmyra as an independent state.

Odenathus did not rule for long. He was assassinated in 268 CE and was succeeded by his beautiful wife Zenobia who ruled Palmyra on behalf of her infant son Vallabathus. Historians of the past relate that she was an extraordinary woman who was both brave and intelligent. She was an expert horsewoman, extremely ambitious, and wanted to build an empire of her own. Determined to release Palmyra from Roman influence and its status as a vassal state, she marched against Antioch in 271 CE and captured the important Mediterranean Port. Next, she sent her army to Egypt, which emerged victorious, and gave her son the title of Augustus, a title, which was used only by the Roman Emperor, and started minting her own currency.

However, Rome was now ruled by a new Emperor, Emperor Aurelian, after settling decisively his border disputes with Germany, marched his army to Antioch to meet the growing menace and power of Palmyra and defeated the army, which was stationed there by Queen Zenobia. After suffering another decisive defeat at the hands of the Romans eighty miles from Palmyra, Zenobia retreated hastily with her generals to Palmyra, and started fortifying the walls of the city.

When the Roman Emperor reached Palmyra, he found the city well-defended. Faced with a superior Roman army, Zenobia appealed to Persia for help, but it never came. Emperor Aurelian settled his army for a long siege near Palmyra. He offered peace and exile to Zenobia, but she rejected his terms. The siege dragged on. The Roman army was receiving supplies, but the people of Palmyra were starving. In this desperate situation, Zenobia decided to escape the siege by riding on a dromedary in the night crossing the Roman army lines. She managed to reach Euphrates before being overtaken and captured by the Roman army.

After Zenobia was taken into captivity, the citizens of Palmyra surrendered. The Roman Emperor entered the city, and had some of the important people of the city put to death, and then brought a trial against Zenobia. Fearing for her own life, Zenobia blamed her advisors for her misadventures against the might of the Roman Empire. Her advisors were executed and life of Zenobia and her son was saved.

Some historians relate that Zenobia committed suicide

their honor. The city continued to thrive under Roman patronage for a time, which continued to add on to its prosperity. However, by the middle of third century CE, Syria was invaded by Persia, and successfully blocked all trade routes to Palmyra. The citizens of Palmyra were left with no choice but to come to terms with the enemy or fight them without Roman help. At this point in time, a leading Senator of Palmyra, Odenathus, entered the scene to deal with the crisis. He tried to buy peace with the Persians but all his attempts at doing so, were rebuffed by the Persians. In the end, he set about the task of raising an army to fight the Persians and enlisted recruits from all over Syria and fashioned them into a disciplined army. Then, he took on the might of the Persians and defeated them, and declared himself the King of Palmyra. With his help, Rome regained its influence in the Middle East and recognized the Palmyra as an independent state.

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unable to bear the humiliation after her defeat. Others relate that she was taken into Rome in a triumphal procession, decked in all her royal jewels with her hands, feet, and neck bound in shackles of gold. According to another report, the Emperor Aurelian had her married to a Roman senator where she lived a comfortable life with her family until the end of her life.

Meanwhile, the people of Palmyra regrouped and made another attempt to win independence from Roman rule, but this uprising was quickly put to an end by Rome. However, this time, Emperor Aurelian had the city sacked. The importance of Palmyra rapidly declined after this event, both as a city and an important trading center.

In the seventh century, the Muslims easily conquered the city and tried to reclaim the destroyed building stones for their own constructions. But, gradually the city of Palmyra ceased to be of any importance to the Muslims and its decline continued until the city was completely deserted by all its inhabitants.

When Western travelers reached Palmyra in the 17th century they found a small tribe of Arabs living in the ruins of the city in huts made up of mud. A mosque had been constructed in the temple of Bel and was there as late as 1929. Today, the only inhabitants of Palmyra are the archeologists who are trying to reclaim the city and piece together the history of this once-magnificent city.

Biography

Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi

Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi was born in the year 1892 at Daryabad, in Barabanki district, Uttar Pradesh, India. His grandfather was a freedom fighter, who fought against British rule and was sentenced by the British authorities for life. However, his sentence was later reduced and he was freed after seven years in a prison. His father was a government official and Maulana Abdul Majid was his youngest son.

Maulana Abdul Majid received his early education in Lakhimpur Kheri and Sitapur. He had his higher education from Canning College, Lucknow, and the Aligarh Muslim University. He managed to graduate and secured a Bachelor in Arts degree. He enrolled to secure his Masters degree in Philosophy, but failed to complete the course.

From his student days, he showed a keen interest in writing articles for newspapers and magazines, which were religious in nature.

He was a voracious reader. He imbibed the best of what he had read into his own personality. Social sciences, mental pathology, and physiology interested him a great deal. He also studied books written by authors such as

Mill, Hume, Spencer, and Bradley. For a time, he came under the influence of their thoughts and turned into a rationalist and a skeptic. Later, he read books on religious philosophy. Hindu philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, Chinese philosophy and the Mathnavi of Maulana Rumi helped him dispel some of his doubts entertained by him on religion.

During this period, he made friends with devout Muslims like Akbar Allahabadi, Maulana Muhammad Ali, and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi. His life had turned a full circle and the Maulana emerged as a devout Muslim under their influence and went on to become the philosopher of Islam and an interpreter of the Holy Qur'an.

He had married in the year 1916. His father had died, and the poor economic conditions of the family forced Maulana to seek employment.

In Aligarh, he got a job as a literary Assistant of the Educational Society of Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan. He resigned from the job after working for two months. Subsequently, he got a job as a translator in Hyderabad, where he worked for eleven months. He resigned his job again, and came back to Lucknow. He was granted a life-pension from the Hyderabad State in recognition of his services to Urdu Literature.

Maulana Abdul Majid had read widely and his literary creations included such books as "The Psychology of Leadership," which was later translated in Urdu. He translated "Lecky's History of Civilization of England" in Urdu. His most famous writings were the translation of

the Holy Qur'an and a commentary on it in English.

Other works were Safar-e-Hejaz; Hakimul Ummah; and Maqalat-e-Majid.

He also published posthumously an autobiography of Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and another book titled "Pages from the Personal Diary of Maulana Muhammad Ali."

During his lifetime, he edited many journals. The first journal edited by him was "Sach" (Truth). It had to be closed down after ten years in circulation. In 1935, he started another journal called "Sidq." It continued publication until 1950. From then onwards, it appeared under a new name "Sidq Jadeed." He continued to edit the journal until his death. His forthright comments on current events won him new readers and admirers. He had a unique style of writing, which was expressive and tinged with humor and sarcasm. In 1967, he got the Arabic Scholar Award from the Government of India. In 1975, the Aligarh Muslim University awarded him a Doctorate in Literature.

He died in January 1977.

Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibn Jarir At-Tabri

In the ninth century A.C, Islamic learning was at its peak. Muslim scholars and scientists excelled in their learning and achievements in different fields. Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibn Jarir at-Tabri surpassed them all. Learned in Hadith literature, he also studied many other subjects to further his knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and the religion of Islam. During the end of his days, he was known as a commentator on the Holy Qur'an, an expert in Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh), and as a famous historian. He was also the author of many books; the most famous of them was his Tafseer of the Holy Qur'an and the other was his encyclopedia on Islamic history.

At-Tabri was born in the city of Amul, in Tabaristan, a mountainous region lying south of the Caspian Sea in the year 839 A.C. Amul had been built on the banks of a river, and the nearest port was a place called Humm, which was at the mouth of the river.

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Schools had been built for children and there were mosques for people to pray. Merchants would trade their goods in the market place. Silks, carpets, vegetables, and animals exchanged hands between the traders and the buyers.

The Brilliant Student

At a very young age, he was sent to a school to learn the Holy Qur'an and calligraphy. In his student days, at-Tabri had developed a talent of mastering long and complex subjects. By the age of seven, he could recite the Holy Qur'an from memory. It was a great achievement, and his parents were extremely proud of him.

In the second stage of his education in the city of Amul, he began to study the Hadith Literature. The books taught him the sayings of the Holy Prophet (saws), his actions, and his approval and disapproval of things. He took care to study them along with the chain of narrators who had reported them to others.

When he had learnt all that was needed to know on the subject, he set his heart on settling down in the city of Rayy to further his knowledge. Rayy was a large, beautiful city that lay on the caravan route to China. Many great scholars of that period had made it their home. At Rayy, he studied Hadith under Ar-Razi and two other scholars. Ar-Razi was a hard taskmaster and he took care to crosscheck with his students to make sure that they had learnt the Hadith from him properly. At-Tabri managed to learn one hundred thousand ahadith from him.

In this period, at-Tabri took a keen self-interest in

learning poetry, for it was the way to master the intricacies of the Arabic language. He learnt many of the poems and recited them from memory. He amazed his friends and teachers with the progress he had made in the study of Arabic literature.

His stay in the city of Rayy was fruitful and had served his purpose. He had been fortunate to learn under the greatest of teachers in those times. He wanted to acquire more knowledge and for that he had to travel to a different place and study under different teachers. In the end, he decided to travel to Baghdad.

His teachers were sorry to see him go. He had been a brilliant student during his entire academic career. Ar-Razi offered him a job of an assistant teacher in order to persuade him to stay at Rayy, but at-Tabari wanted to study Hadith under the guidance of Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal in Baghdad, who was an authority on Hadith and Tafseer. With this thought in his mind, he set out for Baghdad with one of the caravans that traveled from China along the Khurasan road.

At-Tabri was one of the rare scholars who studied without the help of a patron to finance his studies. He did not depend on others to help him out during the course of his studies. He studied and lived on what he earned and spent it on traveling and studying. He accepted only those gifts from his friends, which he was able to match and throughout his life, he was proud of this fact.

It is said that at-Tabri once refused a gift of 10,000 Dirhams from a minister in the King's court. He returned

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the gift with a letter of thanks. The servant returned the gift with a message from the minister saying that if he did not want it for himself; he could give it to the poor. At-Tabri refused to accept it and replied that the minister should know the poor people in the land better than he did. He wished that the minister distributed the money himself. He did not want anybody to say that he accepted money from a minister even to distribute it to the poor. It is also said that one day some of his students presented him with a carpet. He accepted the carpet from the student but insisted on paying its cost.

Journey To Baghdad

On his way to Baghdad, at-Tabri visited the city of Sawa a famous center for business and learning. It had fine buildings that housed many libraries. Astronomical observatories had been built there to study the movement of the stars and the planets. His next stop was in the city of Hamdhan and from there he headed towards Hulwan. The city of Hulwan divided the mountainous regions of Persia and the plains of Iraq. It was a city of gardens with fruit trees growing in it and the surrounding mountains with its snow-capped peaks made the town a scenic place.

At Hulwan, at-Tabri came to know that Ahmad bin Hanbal, the famous scholar of Hadith had died some months ago. He was extremely disappointed at this news, but he made up his mind to continue with his journey to Baghdad as he felt that he would gain much by studying at this city, which was famous throughout the Muslim world for its fine libraries, academies, and scholars.

The Scholar

Baghdad in those days was one of the largest cities in the world with a population of two and half a million people. It was also the center for trade and business. People from all occupations converged on the city to earn their livelihood. It had hospitals, mosques, and public baths.

One of the first places-visited by him was the academy. The director was a kind man who showed at-Tabri around the entire campus and graciously allowed him the use of the library whenever he wished. At-Tabri was also able to talk to other scholars who studied there. He discussed with them their fields of study and got firsthand knowledge of the progress of education.

He spent several years in the city studying Hadith, Fiqh, and Tafseer with the religious scholars who worked there. At the age of 30, he had become a famous scholar in his own right and except for two short trips to Tabaristan, he spent his entire life in the city of Baghdad.

The Popular Teacher

At-Tabri soon became popular as a teacher in Baghdad. Students from distant lands traveled to Baghdad to study under him. He gave lectures and encouraged them towards research work. He advised them to gain knowledge of medicine and mathematics also. He followed a daily program of lecturing and writing. He would start writing from noon until it was time for the afternoon prayers. After that, he lectured his students on Tafseer until the Maghrib prayers. After Maghrib prayers, he would lecture

them on law. He would retire to his room for the night and spent a good deal of it writing on different subjects. He wrote at an average of forty pages a day.

He was very kind to his students and helped them during their studies. He would share meals with them. He advised them to develop the body along with their mind. On his part, he would always be clean and well dressed and won the respect of all with his good behavior.

Commentary Of The Holy Qur'an

At-Tabri had for a long time deliberated writing a commentary of the Holy Qur'an, but he always kept putting off the task. It would take years of hard work, preparation, and study. His students and other scholars started pressurizing him to take up the task. They were willing to extend all help for him to complete the task for they felt that there was a need for a comprehensive commentary on the Holy Qur'an in Muslim literature. But when at-Tabri told them that he wanted to write a commentary of 30,000 pages, they were stunned. They could not believe that anybody could complete such a task within his lifetime.

When the work began on the commentary, the house of at-Tabari became a studio. Each of his students was entrusted with a specific task. They traveled to bookshops and libraries to search for specialized information. Others copied his works, and some worked on abridging his long comments. As the news began to spread, there was a steady stream of visitors to his house daily to see how he was progressing on the task. He worked slowly and carefully and it took several years to complete the job that he had

set out to do. In the commentary, he made an in-depth analysis of the Qur'anic verses, along with its aspects of style and meaning. The result was an encyclopedia that was 30 volumes long.

Orders began to pour in from libraries and academies of the Muslim world. Everyone wanted to have copies of it. His fame spread far and wide and his commentary of the Holy Qur'an was well received everywhere and it became a reference book for the serious students of the Holy Qur'an. Its translations are popular today as it was in those days.

Journey To Amul

For a long time, at-Tabri had wanted to visit Amul - his birthplace. He remembered the days of his childhood and treasured happy memories of that period of his life. He joined a caravan of merchants traveling to the east who were delighted to have the great scholar with them. They spent hours in his company discussing religion. Always ready to share Islamic knowledge with others, he would entertain the merchants with tales from Islamic history.

After reaching the city of Kirmanshah, he headed towards the city of Dinawar. At-Tabri hoped to meet a scholar there by name Abu Hanifah Ad-Dinawari who had also written a commentary of the Holy Qur'an and books on Islamic sciences. At Dinawar, he learnt that Abu Hanifah, whom he had hoped to meet, had left Dinawar on a journey as the caravan of at-Tabri had arrived in the city.

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In those days, the ability of a scholar to memorize ahadith

was an important part of learning and was much admired in a person. Regular contests were held among scholars on their ability to memorize the texts of ahadith. The scholars competing in this contest were expected to not only learn the text of the Hadith, but also narrate from memory the chain of narrators who had transmitted the Tradition of the Holy Prophet (saws).

In one such gathering, at-Tabri was challenged by Ibn Hamdhan who claimed there was no other scholar better than him in memorizing the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (saws). At-Tabri accepted his challenge and in the ensuing contest was able to narrate completely from memory the long list of narrators to every text of tradition quoted by Ibn Hamdhan. Ibn Hamdhan had met his match and had to concede that at-Tabri was better in memorization of ahadith than he was. He stayed in Dinawar for a month.

A Journey Into The Past

At last, the caravan reached Amul, the city of his childhood. He had not seen his family and friends for a long time. They were all overjoyed at his visit. It was a happy homecoming for him. The city of Amul had changed a lot since his childhood. It was a great deal larger and grown since he had last seen it. Many new people had moved into the city. The number of mosques, schools, and hospitals had also increased.

His fame had reached the city of Amul before him. Its people were proud that the famous scholar of the Muslim world was born and brought up in this city. Every day there was a group of people gathered to hear his lectures

and they sought his advice on religious matters. He also visited the various schools of the city to talk to the teachers and the students studying there. For him, it was a delightful reunion with the past.

His heart was, however, set upon returning to Baghdad. The place of a scholar was among his students and books. Sadly, he said goodbye to all his friends and relatives who had made his visit to Amul the most enjoyable moments, which he would cherish for a long time to come. He set off on his return journey to Baghdad. He had been away from the city of Baghdad for four months.

The Great Historian

At-Tabri was 65 years old when he returned to Baghdad. He continued to teach the students who came to him in search of knowledge. At the same time, he was eager to begin work on another writing project.

The success of his Commentary of the Holy Qur'an encouraged him to undertake another encyclopedic work. This time he decided to write an encyclopedia on the History of Islam. Before starting on the project, he spent a good deal of time in its planning and preparation. His students and friends were also enthusiastic about this new project and promised to extend all help that he required from them.

He spent the next 12 years writing his encyclopedia on Islamic history. His job was not easy for he had to collect and compile the material from different sources. He had to rely on oral reports as well to complete his encyclopedia. Much of the material would have been lost if at-Tabri had

not bothered to include it in his work on the History of Islam.

His encyclopedia, "Annals of the Apostles and Kings", chronicled the History of Islam year by year; and attempts to categorize history from creation till the year 915 A.C. By the time he had finished his work, he had gathered all the historical traditions of the Arabs in his voluminous work. The Muslim world was not slow in showing its appreciation, and this work became more famous than his Commentary of the Holy Qur'an, for there was no other works like that in existence at that time.

It is reported that there were at least 20 copies of his encyclopedia in all great libraries in the Muslim world of those days. Hundreds of copyists earned their living copying his work for use of individuals and libraries. Many of his original works were lost over the passage of time. It was only in the end of the last century that modern scholars pieced together his work so that students could study it in modern times. History of at-Tabri is now also available in English.

At-Tabri was now an old man. His latest work on the History of Islam had taken a toll on his health and it began to fail gradually. He suffered from pleurisy. The doctors attending him did their best to restore his health and were unsuccessful in their attempts. He had reached the end of his road of a long and busy life. Finally, at-Tabri died at the age of 85 in the year 923 A.C.

AL-BIRUNI

During the later part of the tenth century, the region of Central Asia had attained a high degree of economic prosperity, literary growth, and cultural development. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Iraq ruled the Kath region. It was at this time, a boy called Muhammad was born in a Persian speaking Tajik family on the 3rd of Dhu'l Hajj 362 A.H corresponding to 4 September 973 A.C. The family of this boy, later known throughout the Muslim world, as Abu Rayhan Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Biruni was Tajik by race but Persian by culture.

The birthplace of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni is shrouded in mystery. His biographers suggest that he was probably born at Birun a suburb in the city of Kath. In those days, Kath was the capital of Gurganj, one of the regions of Khwarzam ruled by the Iraqi princes. The city of Khwarzam, which was twenty farsakh away from Kath, was the capital of the kingdom ruled by Mamunid princes.

There are no records about the early life of Abu Rayhan or his education. It is presumed that he could have received his early education in the traditional Madrasa. In his later years, Abu Rayhan was fortunate to find a benevolent patron in Abi Nasr al-Mansur, a member of the royal house

of Kath, and a scholar in his own right. The material assistance provided by Abi Nasr made the life of al-Biruni comfortable. With his needs cared for, the educational foundations of al-Biruni were strengthened.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was greatly interested in the physical, natural, and biological sciences. He was constantly in search of new information to add to his knowledge. In this process, he befriended many great scholars and teachers of his age. In this period, the city of Khwarzam had developed into a great center of mathematical studies. Translations had been done on various books by a scholar named Musa Ibn Muhammad al Khwarzami under the active sponsorship of the Kath rulers, which made his homeland a great center for such studies.

Abu Nasr Mansur had discovered the use of tangents and cotangents, which greatly accelerated trigonometrical calculations. The academic atmosphere of Khwarzam permeated with the study of mathematics and its allied subjects. Abu Rayhan, who was born with a keen analytical mind and comprehensive abilities, was quickly drawn to these studies, which suited both his liking and temperament. Earlier to this, traveling in search of knowledge to distant places by scholars had been regarded as a part of education in the Muslim world. However, the rulers of Kath had established numerous rich libraries all over their kingdom, which greatly reduced this need.

A noteworthy trait in Abu Rayhan's character was his insatiable thirst for knowledge. He had developed an early interest in Indian sciences. His curiosity to learn more had led him on travels to many regions in western India. Over

a period, his visits to northwest India had become sporadic and less frequent because of his preoccupation with his book "al-Qanun al Masudi". Abu Rayhan had learnt all about India during his travels to western India and Kashmir but he was keen to visit the other centers of Indian learning in the eastern and southern parts of India.

There is very little known about the family of Abu Rayhan. It is possible that he was in some way freed from the burdens and responsibilities of parenthood early in his life, which made him lavish all his love on his studies and writing books. There is evidence suggesting that he was acquainted with the Greek language. His encyclopedic knowledge and proficiency in language could be gauged in his book "Kitab al-Saydanah" where he gives the names of medicinal herbs and drugs in Arabic and various other languages. He also had a fair knowledge of the language of the Roman Byzantine Empire.

He kept in touch with his contemporaries among the Syrian and Christian intellectuals to enhance his knowledge. One of them was the famous physician Abu Sahl Masihi, a Christian. Another Syrian Christian merchant had taught him the correct pronunciation and the Greek names of many medicines. His constant interaction with other scholars had brought him into the contact with Ibn Sina, an extraordinary scholar of high rating during those times.

Abu Rayhan was also acquainted with the existing Arabic translations of Indian works. He found them to be inadequate and defective. These errors in the original works led him to study the original Sanskrit books. When political events brought him into direct contact with the Hindus, he

made the full use of this opportunity. He learnt Sanskrit at the age of forty-five. After a long period of study, he made himself proficient in the language. It is reported that he had a vocabulary of over 2,500 Sanskrit words. He collected books and hired the services of Hindu scholars to help him understand the texts, without sparing money and effort. His studies, references, and renderings of the original Sanskrit works serve as useful material for any student of Sanskrit and Puranic studies.

Abu Rayhan had spent most of his life living in Khwarzam, Jurjan, and Rayy. During his stay in Kath, he had received patronage from the royal family. Among his mentors and guides, care was extended by Mawla Amir al-Muminin who had helped him further his academic career. The subsequent political upheavals in Kath forced him leave the kingdom and head for the city of Rayy. Deprived of the royal patronage, he encountered great hardships and lived a life of penury. Despite this, he was confident of his great talent and intellect. The other scientists mocked at his theories of the shape of the earth and its rotation, because of his poverty.

In the course of time, his financial status improved. Gradually, the scholars and scientists of Rayy accepted him into their fold. The city of Rayy had gained a reputation of being a great center of astronomy along with Baghdad and Khwarzam. Fakhr-al-Dawlah (976 A.C -992A.C), who was ruling Rayy, had extended his patronage in constructing an observatory in the city, where astronomical observations and calculations were carried out. After the death of Fakhr al-Dawlah, Abu Rayhan failed to secure the patronage of

the reigning family that had succeeded to the throne. In the meanwhile, Shams al-Ma'ali had regained his lost kingdom of Jurjan and Tabaristan and hearing about the celebrated astronomer invited him to his court. He stayed for nearly a decade with his new patron. He had stayed in Rayy for three years.

In Jurjan, Abu Rayhan, famous as al-Biruni completed his famous book, "Al-Athar al-Baqiyah" (Chronology) and dedicated it to his new patron, who was also an author and a scholar. Shams al-Ma'ali greatly admired the genius of al-Biruni and invited to stay with him at his royal residence. Al-Biruni gratefully acknowledged the bounty of his patron and later dedicated another book by name "Risalah al-Tajrid al-Sha'at". While at Jurjan, al-Biruni got an opportunity to conduct preliminary measurements of the earth's latitude.

At that time, al-Biruni received an invitation from the ruler of Khwarzam, Abu al-Hasan Ali, who took a keen interest in surrounding himself with scholars of renown. The Khwarzam court possessed an outstanding group of scholars and Ibn Sina was one among them. Abu Nasr Iraq, a scholar of the court excelled in the field of mathematics; Abu al-Khayr Khummar in tibb (medicine); Abu Rayhan al-Biruni in astronomy; Ibn Sina and Abu Sahl Masihi in Greek philosophy.

These scholars were given all material assistance by the court to enjoy a carefree existence. They spent their time in producing highly academic dissertations, held discussions, and conducted research in their field of specialization. An atmosphere free of needs was created

for the learned gathering of scholars of exceptional caliber to spur them into greater efforts. The genius of al-Biruni was recognized by the scholars and acknowledged by the royal court. The grand galaxy of scholars was eclipsed by the genius of Ibn Sina and al-Biruni.

After the death of Abul Hasan al-Ali, his younger brother, Abul Abbas, became the ruler of Khwarzam. He ruled the kingdom up to the year 1017 A.C. He tried to maintain the policies of his elder brother in matters concerning the state and the court. In due course of time, Abul Abbas was assassinated, and Mahmud Ghaznawi in retaliation of his brother-in-law's death attacked and annexed Khwarzam. Ibn Sina and Masihi had left Khwarzam before the attack to seek employment elsewhere. Al-Biruni enjoyed greatly the confidence of Abul Abbas and gained access to the inner council of the ruler, who began depending on him for advice in matters concerning the state. He became his chief advisor and began to wield considerable political influence as well, but without formally being designated as a Wazir, a privilege that he was never to hold again.

Life In Ghaznah

After the fall of Khwarzam, five thousand people were brought in captivity to Ghaznah. A few among them were sent as prisoners to India. For a time al-Biruni enjoyed the patronage and generosity of Mahmood Ghaznawi, who appreciated deeply the learning and genius of the scholar. After his death, his eldest son, Masud, became his benefactor. He treated him on a far superior level as compared to other scholars and enabled him to devote all his time for his studies by making him free from all

economic anxieties or government duties, a privilege that was reserved only for a scholar of high learning and renown.

During his stay in Ghaznah, he set up an astronomical observatory and conducted experiments to measure the latitude of Ghaznah. In the year 1019 A.C and 1020 A.C, he started writing two treatises on mathematics which were titled as "Istikhraj al-Awtar" and "Ifrad al-Miqal". He completed writing them in the year 1022 A.C. In the year 1025 A.C, he completed another book, the "Kitab al-Tahdid". He wrote the "Kitab al-Tafhim" in the year 1029 A.C. In the next year, Mahmood died and his famous book "Kitab al-Hind" was completed after the death of the Sultan.

Visits To India

A study of al-Biruni's life reveals that there were three periods from the year 1018 to 1030 A.C, during which his presence was not reported in Ghaznah. During these periods, al-Biruni visited India with the permission of the Sultan. Earlier to this, his stay in Kabul and Ghaznah had provided him with the opportunity to learn Sanskrit and other Indian dialects from the Persian knowing Hindu residents of Ghaznah. His intention was to learn the secrets of astronomy from the Indian astronomers. Al-Biruni was always on the look out for ways and means to increase his knowledge and he had been a keen student of the Indian astronomy from his early days. Over the years, his studies and constant visits to India, led him to increase his knowledge about the subcontinent in a bewildering number of fields, which included: grammar, literature, religion,

astronomy, mathematics, beliefs, and geography, etc.

He visited Multan the old pilgrim center of Hinduism, where he gained access to the books of the Hindu scholar Balabhadra. He also visited Sialkot and Nandana in search of knowledge from Kashmiri scholars, for Kashmir and Varnasi (Benares) were the two great centers of learning in North India. His purpose was to make Ghaznah the chief center of astronomical and scientific studies, including the studies of latitudes and longitudes from the knowledge gained during his stay in India. In Nandana, he had carried out experiments in measuring the earth's surface by using the trigonometrical method.

Al-Biruni visited different cities of Punjab. In the direction of Kashmir, he went as far as the fort of Rajagiri situated near Mount Kularjak. The forts of Rajagiri and Lahore were strongly fortified and served as frontier posts of Ghaznah towards Kashmir. It was during these visits that al-Biruni started to come into contact with the Indian scholars. It is also possible that the scholar visited other towns nearby during the course of his journey. Traveling to these cities was by no means an easy task for the monsoon conditions and the floods in the seven rivers (Saptha Sindhu) made the journey difficult. Rains and the intense summer heat also deterred travelers from the cool regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia from journeying along this way.

After his return from India, he carried correspondence with leading Indian astronomers of that time and scholars of Kashmir who posed certain questions to him. These questions were posed to him only after his fame as the

Sagar (ocean) and as a wizard of knowledge had spread and possibly, when he had returned to Ghaznah after his trip to India. When he completed the "Kitab al-Hind" in the year 1030 A.C, his information about the latitudes and longitudes was limited to the towns of Punjab and Madhya Desha (modern Uttar Pradesh) only. However, he was constantly in search of new geodetical information and in his book "al Qanun al-Masudi" one finds a mention of the southern cities of India like Tanjore, Rameshwaram etc.

In The Service Of Mahmood Ghaznawi

In his books, he also corrects the image of Sultan Mahmood as an intolerant person, who suppressed Hindus and destroyed their temples. In fact, his aggrandizement in war was as manifest in the Muslim regions of Central Asia and Iran, as in India. He was a great conqueror, but he never destroyed any temples in peacetime. Records suggest that he was tolerant towards Hindus and they lived in Ghaznah, Kabul, and Punjab, without any apparent molestation and free from being forcibly converted into Islam. Some of them had found service with the Sultan. The most outstanding and unique proof of the Sultan's care for his non-Muslim subjects was the issuing of a bilingual currency bearing inscriptions in both Arabic and Sanskrit. Some of the coins found bear the date 1021 A.C and 1028 A.C as the date of their issue. Mahmood also had a number of persons well versed in Indian languages employed in his court. One such person had translated the Hindi verse composed by Ganda, the Raja of Kalinjar in praise of the Sultan.

In the service of the court of Mahmood, al-Biruni was

often called to give his opinions on difficult matters relating to astronomy. He was shown priceless gems for his opinion and evaluation. He was asked to interview embassies accredited to Ghaznah by other countries in the region. He made Ghaznah the leading center for astronomical and geographical studies. The thirteen years spent in the service of Mahmood contributed to the maturity of many of his scientific ideas and theories. Mahmood's patronage had revived the fortunes of this great scientist and according to him, "helped him improve his dress and looks." Al-Biruni had a fair knowledge of astrology as it was practiced in those days. The rest of his life was spent in giving final additions to his books.

When al-Biruni was more than fifty years of age, his health deteriorated and he fell seriously ill. The reason for this could be the hardships he had to encounter during his travels to India and the intense amount of labor that he had put into his study of Indian sciences and the Sanskrit language. He became very weak and thin, but he overcame his illness, lived up to the age of 75, and was apparently able to finish most of his books.

The Patronage Of Masud Ghaznawi

After the death of Mahmood on 30th April 1030 A.C, Muhammad his youngest son ruled the city of Ghaznah. Later, Muhammad was overthrown from power and was imprisoned in Taginabad. In the year 1031, the eldest son, Masud, was crowned as the King of Ghaznah. The new Sultan was fond of astronomical sciences. Knowledge in the court of Masud was put on a very high pedestal. The best way of seeking favors from him was through

knowledge. Al-Biruni found patronage under his rule and the Sultan made friends with him and he benefited greatly from his financial help. The scientist had devoted most of his life in studying mathematics and known through it, and, therefore, he decided to serve the Sultan by composing a magnum opus on astronomy, which he titled "al Qanun al-Masudi".

Masud was a keen learner and he enquired from al-Biruni the reason for the differences in the duration of the day and night in different countries, and the reason as to why the sun did not set at the poles. Al-Biruni wrote a book "Kitab al-layl wa al-Nahar" in Arabic in an easy language for the King to understand the astronomical sciences. Masud knew Arabic and was highly pleased with the book. It is said that on the completion of "al Qanun al-Masudi", the Sultan bestowed an elephant load of silver on the author. However, al-Biruni had become disinterested in material possessions and, therefore, returned it back to the King. He had become completely devoted to his studies and he went about on his task of acquiring knowledge with a single-minded concentration. His desire for long life was prompted less by the love for this world than by fear that he may not be able to finish all the tasks he had set out to accomplish as a seeker of knowledge.

After the death of Masud, his son Mawdud succeeded him to the throne. He was known for his justice and good character. Al-Biruni continued with his studies under his rule, living in comfort and respect in his court. Under his rule, al-Biruni wrote the book "Kitab al-Jamahir fi'l Jawahir" and dedicated another book called "Kitab al-Dastur" to the new ruler.

Death Of A Genius And Scholar

It was during the time of King Mawdud that al-Biruni died on 11th September 1048CE after living for thirty-one years under the patronage of the Yamini dynasty. Even during his last hours, his appetite for knowledge had not diminished. The "Kitab al-Saydanah" was written in this period. When al-Biruni was nearing the end of his life, he employed a scribe to write the book as his eyesight was failing him.

Faqih Abu al-Hasan Ali Ibn Eesa paid him a visit before his death and the great scientist did not want to pass his last moments in his life without learning something useful. He asked the Faqih to tell him the account of *jadat al-fasidah*. He memorized it from the learned man and repeated it correctly after him. When Abu al-Hasan came out after meeting al-Biruni, he heard the wailings of women from inside. The great master had passed away taking his genius with him into the Universe beyond.

The Uncompromising Physician and Scholar of Medicine

In the days of old, the kings and rulers of the world were often victims of intrigue at the hands of their enemies. The best way to assassinate a king in those days was to poison him. In turn, the rulers would choose attendants serving on them with care. They viewed physicians of the land with distrust for their knowledge of drugs, and their effects on the human body could make them highly qualified assassins. The Caliph al-Mutawakkil, who ruled Baghdad from 846 C.E-861 C.E, felt it necessary to test the integrity of the court physicians.

Abu Zayd Hunayn Ibn Ishaq al Ibadi was the most famous medical scholar in the capital city of Baghdad. Hunayn enjoyed an excellent reputation with the people who came to him for treatment, and in the Caliph's court. The Caliph approached Hunayn and offered to reward him generously if he would prepare for him a poison, which the Caliph would use to eliminate an enemy. Hunayn replied, "In my profession, I have only learnt the action of drugs that is used to heal the human body. If the Caliph

wishes me to prepare poison, he should kindly allow him time to go and learn about them."

The Caliph insisted that he wanted the poison right away, and started to compel him to prepare the potion immediately. On seeing the Caliph's persistence, Hunayn became equally determined that he would not yield to his demands which would violate his professional code of ethics. He explained to the Caliph that a physician is sworn never to administer a medicine that would cause injury or death to those patients seeking treatment from him. It was his job to help people and not hurt them.

Al-Mutawakkil pretended to be outraged at his defiance. He ordered Hunayn to be thrown into the prison and threatened him with execution if he would not act in accordance with his demands. Hunayn declared, "I am willing to die, but in the end Allah will vindicate my position and innocence." Finally, al-Mutawakkil released him with the explanation that he had been testing his integrity and honesty. He promoted him and gave him generous rewards.

The renowned French medical historian Lucian Leclerc, who had studied the works of Hunayn called him the greatest scholar in the ninth century medicine. His exemplary life had helped establish an ethical code of conduct for the members of the medical profession.

Hunayn was born in the year 809 C.E to Ishaq, who was also a medical practitioner in Iraq. Recognizing the potential in his son, he sent him to the Abbasid capital for advanced education in the art of healing the sick and the injured. In Baghdad, Hunayn enrolled himself in the earliest

known private medical school in the Muslim world under the tutorship of an eminent physician of those times, Yuhanna Ibn Masawayhl. Very soon, a misunderstanding developed between the pupil and his teacher and they parted ways.

Nevertheless, his enthusiasm and desire to gain knowledge of the healing art led him to study the Greek books on medicine. After having mastered them, he decided to translate them into Arabic under the patronage of the court physician Jibra'il Ibn Bakhtishu, and the sons of Ibn Musa Ibn Shakir. His talents were soon recognized and in the year 830 C.E, he was appointed by the Caliph Abdullah al-Ma'mun to head the Bayt al-Hikmah, a state-supported institution for the translation of classical writings and the promotion of useful knowledge. Hunayn continued his intellectual pursuits under different caliphs and philanthropists until the reign of Caliph al- Mutawakkil.

As a translator, Hunayn traveled to different countries in search of different manuscripts of the same work, and compared one copy with the other to reconstruct the original text. Once that was done, he would proceed to translate it without being overly literal in his translations, and yet the works translated by him would be scholarly and precise. In the five decades of his active life, Hunayn and his translators rendered into Arabic all the books available in Greek on life sciences. Among the famous works that were translated by him was Hippocratic corpus, the writings of Aristotle, Dioscorides, and Galen, as well as the commentaries and revisions written by other Greek scholars on the subject.

Hunayn made significant additions and improved upon the existing Greek books of medicine. He modified medical theories and teaching procedures. Like his contemporary, al-Kindi, he coined numerous medical words that would become the part of the vocabulary of those who practiced the medical profession. He helped devise practical concepts and procedures for study of the life sciences. His book "al-Masa'il fi al-Tibb" (Problems of the Healing Art) was the most dependable manual used by the examiners for issuing licenses for physicians practicing medicine. Subsequently, the book was commented upon, summarized, and interpreted by authors from the tenth to the fourteenth century. His book was widely studied in the West after it was translated into Latin.

Bibliographers credited Hunayn with twenty-nine titles and placed him foremost among the founders of Arabic life sciences. His ten treatises on anatomy, physiology, and ophthalmology influenced those who studied his works in the Muslim and Christian world for many centuries after him.

Hunayn continued to enjoy the patronage of Caliph al-Mutawakkil, until his death in Baghdad in the year 873 C.E.

Travels

Palgrave's Arabia

The Background

By the later part of the 19th century, there was considerable interest among the Europeans about the land of Arabia and the Arabs. The plight of Prophet Ibrahim's wife Hajirah and her son Ishmael in the wilderness of the desert of Makkah had moved them to pity and had excited their sympathy. They had read "Arabian Nights" and the wonderful stories of the life and times of Caliph Harun al-Rashid and the wonders of Baghdad under his rule. They had followed Sindbad the Sailor on his adventures in the mysterious island of Serendeeb and the Eastern seas and his other adventures in the seas had captured the imagination of the people of those times.

In bits and pieces, the Europeans learnt that they owed the present day knowledge of Modern Arithmetic to Arabic numerals and the Arabs. They learnt Algebra (al-gebr) was developed and gifted by the Arabs to the Western world without which much of the progress made in modern science and the everyday business would have been impossible. The Arabs who were pioneers of Oriental commerce had acquainted the people of Western Asia and Europe with the products of India and the Far East. Arab navigators and merchants had traveled in their commercial

carriers between the ports of Arabia and the shores of the Mediterranean carrying with them precious cargo on their ships and stories of the unexplored lands of the East.

Gradually, it came to be known in the Western world that the descendants of Ishmael had inherited from Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) their belief in One God. They had, after Ishmael, lapsed into idolatry of another branch of the Arab family who inhabited the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. According to the Arabs, the people of southern Arabia were not Ismaelities but descendants of Qahtan - the Joktan of the Hebrews - and at the commencement of the Christian era; all the Arabs of the peninsula were worshipping idols. At some point of time during the first century of the Christian era, some of the tribes had embraced the Christian faith and retained it until the arrival of Prophet Muhammad on the scene. In the later part of the Prophet's life, the entire land of Arabia followed the religion of Islam preached by him and became Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad had lived long enough to bring the entire Arabian Peninsula under the sway of Islam. The rightly guided Caliphs, who came after him, extended their rules beyond the land of Arabia. They had won absolute victories over the Persian and the Roman armies and had subdued the lands of Syria, Egypt, and Persia. The Religion of Islam soon took root among the inhabitants of conquered lands and flourished. It brought a set of laws framed by the Holy Qur'an and with it a social revolution that scrapped all preexisting civil and criminal laws and heralded for them a dawn of a new way of life.

After consolidating their rule over their territories, the

Muslim Caliphs turned their courts and cities into centers of civilization and their benevolence attracted the learned from other countries to seek employment in cities of the Islamic empire. The philosophy of ancient Greece was taught on the banks of the River Tigris at a time when it was still unknown in Western Europe; and under the liberal patronage of the Caliphs the works of Plato, Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates along with other Greek authors were translated into Arabic with commentaries.

The governors appointed by the Caliphs to administer different territories under their rule were men of cultivated minds and polished manners. They maintained the state and were as generous as their caliphs in appointing Arabs of all grade in their service who would further the cause of knowledge and learning. As a result, almost the entire Arab population partook in the cultivation, and refinement of the Arab civilization, and the wealth that the service imparted and shared the dignity of the dominant race in the world at that time.

Meanwhile, the Religion of Islam had spread far beyond the limits of Arab rule in Asia. The Turkish tribes had accepted the new faith and carried it into the confines of China, Afghanistan, and to northern India. From Egypt, the Arabs pushed their conquest into Africa to the shores of Atlantic. They crossed into Spain and subdued and colonized the richest portions in the country. From there, they made inroads into the heartland of France and were held back with greatest difficulty by the forces of Charles Martel. Sicily became an Arab possession and Malta was permanently occupied.

The Arabs had also maintained commercial links with islands of the Eastern seas and had maintained agencies in them even before the arrival of Islam. Subsequent migrations, traders and missionaries carried the religion of Islam to remote areas of the principal islands and found ready converts among its people. As a result, the written character of the Malay race contains a large proportion of Arabic and its people accepted the religion of Islam as their way of life. On the other hand, the Arabs who settled along the east coast of Africa to the Mozambique Channel also followed the religion of Islam and influenced others in the region to their faith.

Nevertheless, the political and the military power of the Arabs soon decayed and ultimately collapsed. From Central Asia came the merciless Mongolian hordes in the 13th century and wrested from the Caliphs a greater part of their dominions and greatly reduced their empire. The succeeding centuries pressed the Arabs back almost within the limits of the Arabian Peninsula. After having exercised power and a rule of several centuries, enjoying the luxuries of splendid courts and great cities, living in the great centers of Arab civilization and refinement of culture, the Arabs were forced to retire to their desert homes and tents - dates and camels - rearing horses and sheep - to resume a pristine life and occupations of the desert dwellers.

Geographically, the term Arabia was not applied exclusively to the Arabian Peninsula, of which three sides are bounded by the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf and its cape cut across from its narrowest part by a line of eight hundred miles drawn from Yanbu

on the Red Sea to Kuwait, which lies in the northwest angle of the Arabian Gulf. But those limits would exclude a large portion of the historical Arabia, which extends beyond the Peninsula and its isthmus, of which the limits are not accurately defined.

Beginning from the northeastern shore of the Red Sea the Arabian Peninsula consists of low lands along its coast of varying breadth called Tihama. Behind the lowlands is a mountain range of a considerable altitude, consisting in some parts of Oman and Yemen of successive groups of mountains that extend deep into the interior. Among its provinces is Hejaz, in which are the cities of Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah-Yanbu and Taif along with other town and villages. Further south is Yemen with cities of Sana'a and Mocha besides other villages along its coast and in its interior. The principality of Oman extends from the Hadramaut region and has its capital in Muscat. On the southern and western shores of the Arabian Gulf beyond the limits of Oman are the kingdoms of Bahrain and Kuwait completing the circuit of the Arabian Peninsula from one end to another.

However, the people of Europe had little information about Arabia for much of it was shrouded in mystery and was based on hearsay accounts until the beginning of the nineteenth century. From eighteenth century onwards, men of intellect, scientists, adventurers, and explorers visited different parts of Arabia with the intention of unraveling the mysteries of the land and its people. Earliest in date was Castern Niebuhr who contributed a great deal of information on Arabia and the Arabs to the outside world.

He gave an accurate account of Yemen, the Arabian land of the ancients. Bruckhardt who came after him left a good description of the Land of Hejaz and its cities, as no other European adventurer had been able to give. His description was such that it left no room for other travelers who followed him to Hejaz to add anything new to it.

During his travels in Oman, Wellsted enjoyed advantages as no other traveler before him had done. He traveled under the protection of the sovereign of Muscat. He kept a scrupulous account of his journey and left behind an accurate account of the topography and conditions of Oman. Najd was the only province of Central Arabia left for the other travelers to be fully explored. It was known to be populous and productive. Bruckhardt in a note added to his published travels had directed special attention at Najd. At that time, Toussoun Pasha at the head of the Egyptian Army in 1814 had penetrated deep into Qasim, one of the districts of Najd. Bruckhardt had laid down with considerable accuracy the stages and distances from Madinah the principal towns of the province of Najd.

In the year 1816-18, the Egyptian army accompanied by European officers of intelligence had overrun Najd and had destroyed its capital Dirayah and occupied the country up to the shores of the Arabian Gulf. Najd ceased to be an unexplored territory. In 1819, Captain Sadlier of the British Army was sent on a mission to Ibrahim Pasha to prevent any misunderstanding about the expedition that had sent from India against the sea-pirates that infested the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Landing at Qatif, he crossed the Arabian Peninsula and traveled to Yanbu and in the process

became the first European who had succeeded in making his way across the country from sea to sea. He passed Najd through Dirayah, Shaqra, Unayzah, ar-Rass and Hinaykiah. He traversed the same provinces traveled later by Palgrave (from west to east) with the exception of the province al-Jouf and Jabal Shammar. The value of information obtained by Captain Sadlier was greatly appreciated in France and elsewhere.

Later in 1823, M. Mengin published his elaborate work of the "History of Egypt under Muhammad Ali," of which Palgrave, from his residence in Egypt and his fondness for all literature connected to Egypt might have expected to know something. His work, which was judged later as accurate and honestly prepared, was a detailed account of the European officers who had accompanied the Egyptian army into Najd. Apart from a detailed narrative of the operations, he gives curious and interesting information about the country of Arabia and its inhabitants. Other details of the country, its towns, inhabitants and its population are also included in his book. He also writes about the laws and the customs of Najd; of its production, animal and vegetable; of its trade; of its agriculture and the manner of conducting it. He also makes a mention about taxes levied on the people of Najd by its rulers, and the history of Najd. The book also carries maps, which illustrates the topography of Najd with considerable care and accuracy.

Dr. Wallin a native of Finland traveled in Northern Arabia in 1845-48 and visited both Jouf and Jabal Shammar. The notes of his journey, with a sketch map showing the principal towns and villages of Najd first appeared in 1851

in the "Transactions of the Royal Geographical Society, volume 20. During his journey, he encountered the Bani Shammar, as far as the west of Tihama, which belonged to them, and writes about the various tribes that populated the Great Nafud Desert and their hold over eastern Iraq. He writes, "The Bani Shammar were under the authority of al-Rashid, the chief Sheikh of all the Shammar in Najd."

Layard in his book "Nineveh and Babylon," gives an account of Jabal Shammar, which contains the substance of all that has been narrated by Palgrave in his book. He writes, "Of late...Ibn Rashid...chief of...Jabal Shammar has by his courage and abilities acquired the whole of that district.... Pilgrims under his protection could...again venture to take the shortest road to Makkah...The chief punctually fulfilled his engagements and the caravan I have described was the first that had crossed the desert for many years without accident or molestation.... Ibn Rashid was described to me as a powerful and...an enlightened chief, who had restored security to the country, and who desired to encourage trade and the passage of caravans through his territory."

Such were the accounts of Najd that were laid before the European public before 1860. Before Palgrave's visit to Arabia, Najd had been explored thoroughly and extensive and minute information about the people and the country existed in the records of Europeans. But, Palgrave represents the country in his book as unexplored before he penetrated into it. According to him it was a blank in the map of Asia, an unknown virgin soil.

The Journey

At the outset of his journey in 1862, Palgrave details to his readers the reasons for his journey into Arabia. He writes, "Once for all let us attempt to acquire a fairly correct and comprehensive knowledge of the Arabia Peninsula. With its coasts...we are already acquainted; several of its maritime provinces have been...sufficiently explored; Yemen, Hejaz, Makkah and Madinah are no longer mysteries to us nor are we wholly unaware about information on the districts of Hadramaut and Oman. But of the interior of the vast region, of its plains and mountains, its tribes and cities, of its governments and institutions, of its inhabitants, their ways and customs, of their social condition(s).... It is time to fill up this blank in the map of Asia, and this, at whatever risks, we will now endeavor; either the land before us shall be our tomb, or we shall travel it at its fullest breadth, and know what it contains from shore to shore."

"The men of the land," he tells us, "rather the land of the men, were my main object of research and principal study. My attention was directed to the moral, intellectual, and political conditions of living Arabia rather than to the physical phenomena of the country-of great indeed, but to me of inferior interest. Palgrave was commissioned to start his journey by the Order of Jesuits for which the Emperor of France supplied the necessary funds. He tells us of his noble intentions at the start of his journey of the "hope of doing something towards the permanent social good of those wide regions; the desire of bringing the Eastern life into contact with the quickening stream of European

progress; perhaps a curiosity to know the yet unknown, and the restlessness of enterprise not rare in Englishmen."

He prepared himself for the journey by first studying the Arabic language until it became to him almost like a mother tongue. After a careful study of the best Arabic authorities on the history along with the ways and manners of the Semitic nations-with more than ordinary capacity, presence of mind and address-and imbibing many of the prejudices and views of the other Europeans and his associates he sets out on his journey. Like many of the other Europeans who traveled before him to Arabia, he failed to understand or appreciate any other mode of life other than that of cities and towns visited by him.

He speaks about the Bedouins of Arabia in his book with detestation and his long digressions into theological subjects often present an unpleasant reading to the readers. Nevertheless, the account of his journey in Arabia is a pleasant and entertaining book of travel. There is no doubt that the broad outlines of the scenes he depicts are from personal observation and generally faithful. Having resolved to go to Najd, Palgrave selected a direct route from Gaza, which was difficult to travel and less frequented. Crossing the caravan road from Damascus to Madinah at Ma'an, he remains there for some days to collect camels and guides for his onward journey. From there, he strikes into the desert, on the route to al-Jouf. Traveling in disguise as a Syrian physician, he had taken care to supply himself with the requisite drugs and Arabic Medical books.

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of other merchandise of those articles for which he hoped to find a ready sale. On this he remarks, "Could we have foreseen the real nature of the countries before us, we might have dispensed a good part of our mercantile provisions, designed mainly for Bedouin purchasers and augmented on the other hand our medical supplies, more adapted to townsmen and villagers. But supposing like most people that Arabia was almost exclusively a territory of nomads and that the fixed population of the towns and cities was relatively small and unimportant, we considered the former class of articles at least as available as the latter; a grievous mistake for which we became soon aware."

Palgrave soon learnt on the first stage of his journey, and through the rest of his way traveling across inner provinces of Najd that the needs of the Bedouins were small and they cared little for the things he carried but more for his services as a physician, whereas, trading was done by the people of the city of the towns and villages. But, Palgrave would learn about that later in his travels in Arabia. After traveling for several days, in the course of which the travelers narrowly escaped destruction by the simoom, the poison breath of the desert, they arrived at the district of Wadi Sirhan in which they found water and encampment of the Sherarat Arabs. The travelers were hospitably received, and a sheep was killed to welcome their guests.

At length they approached Jouf. It was an isolated valley, which was about seventy miles long and twelve broad with an estimated population of over 30,000 people, and was well watered and a productive land. There were palm grove

and clustering fruit tree patches found in dark-green patches on the way to the city and flat-house tops half buried under the garden foliage as they approached it from the west. It offered a lovely scene to the weary travelers who were tired after traveling through the long march across the desert from Gaza in Palestine up to the first entrance on inhabited Arabia. There was a brown mass of irregular masonry crowning a central hill beyond a tall solitary tower that overlooked the opposite side of the hill.

Filled with renewed vigor and enthusiasm by the view before them, the travelers pushed their tired beasts forward and were descending the craggy slope of the first valley, when two horsemen fully dressed and armed in the fashion of the Arabs of those parts came up towards them from the town and saluted them with a loud and hearty "Marhaba" or "welcome". Without any introduction they asked the travelers to "alight and eat," and descending briskly from their light-limbed horses and untying a large leather bag filled with excellent dates and a water-skin, filled with sweet water from a running spring, they spread out these refreshments on a flat rock adding "We were sure that you must be hungry and thirsty, and so we have come ready and provided," and after inviting them once more to sit down and begin.

The travelers were indeed hungry and thirsty. The dates that had been laid out before them were those of Jouf, the choicest of their kind that were grown in northern Arabia. The water that was freshly drawn felt cool and refreshing on their tongues compared to what they had drunk from the wells along the way. Without much delay they set down

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to enjoy the feast that was laid presently before them, leaving the future with all its cares to providence and the course of events. As they sat there eating, Palgrave took the occasion to study minutely the outward appearances of his benefactors.

The eldest among the Arabs was apparently a man of about forty years in age, tall, dark-complexioned, with well-proportioned facial features and body. He had an intelligent face and handsomely dressed for an Arab, wearing a red cloth vest with large hanging sleeves, over his long white shirt, and with a silver-hilted sword hanging by his side. Everything about the Arab indicated that he was a person with some wealth and importance. He was Ghafil al-Haboob, the chief of the most important family of Bait al-Haboob who had been once the rulers of the town. But now, like the rest of their countrymen, subjects of Prince Talal of Jabal Shammar, and ruled by his governor Hamud.

His companion Dafee, by name, was younger in years and slender build. He was richly dressed and carried like Ghafil, the silver-hilted sword common in Arabia to all men of good birth and circumstances. His family name was Haboob, and his features spoke of a man of a milder and open character. He was one of the many cousins of Ghafil.

The travelers became the guests of Ghafil-not without some protests from Dafee, who wanted to have the honor of entertaining them. But finding the residence of the chief of the Haboob inadequate to practice medicine and gathering information about the Arabs, Palgrave insisted on moving to other quarters in the town along with the

men in his company.

After a time, they visited Governor Hamud, and there they encountered the more polished inhabitants of Jabal Shammar. They were, in fact, members of the Privy Council of Talal ibn Rasheed the ruler of the country, who had annexed Jounf to his possessions. With much ease the travelers were drawn into conversation. The Arabs showed great interest in their welfare and united in encouraging them to travel to Hail, where they assured them of an excellent welcome from Prince Talal.

Thus encouraged, Palgrave camped for eighteen days in al-Jouf, where they were hospitably treated. He had an opportunity to practice medicine with much success. Later they set out on the route to Hail, the capital of Prince Talal, who governed the region on behalf of King Faysal of Arabia and appeared to exercise an independent authority over his subjects. He was famous among the Arabs of the region as a remarkable man in his country and generation: prudent, but full of courage, farseeing in his policy, and formidable in war.

Prince Talal was the chief of the numerous and powerful al-Shammar tribe. Besides those settled in towns and villages, a large part of the tribe were Bedouins who were always on the move between Jabal Shammar and the River Euphrates, while another division pitched its tents on the eastern bank of the River Tigris.

At the city of Hail the travelers remained for some time, objects of suspicion to some, and of curiosity to all, but on the whole treated with courtesy and hospitality. In order

to arrive at the city Palgrave had to pass over a portion of the Great Nafud Desert. Everyone will recognize the accuracy with which he describes the journey across the desert:

"We are now traversing an immense ocean of loose reddish sand, unlimited to the eye, heaped up in enormous ridges running parallel to each other from north to south, undulation after undulation each swelling to a great height, with slant sides and rounded crests furrowed in every direction by the... gales of the desert. In the depths between the traveler finds himself as it were imprisoned in a suffocating sandpit, hemmed in by burning walls on every side; while at other times, while laboring up on the slope, he overlooks what seems a vast sea of fire, swelling under a heavy monsoon wind, and ruffled by a cross-blast into little red-hot waves. Neither shelter nor rest for eye and limb amid torrents of light and heat poured from above on an answering glare reflected below."

From Hail the travelers proceeded through the district of Qassim to Riyadh, the capital of King Faysal. The city of Riyadh was the seat of his government and king along with his subjects were the followers of the reformist movement of Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, who had returned to Areehd after an absence of several years, studying Islamic theology under renowned teachers at Basrah and Damascus. He attached himself to the petty court of a chief Ibn Ma'amer of Ayanah, an ancient and a considerable town, which was now in ruins not far from Dirayah and Riyadh. But after unsuccessfully preaching to the people to return to the original text and teaching of

the Holy Qur'an, which was not acceptable to the authorities, he sought refuge with Saud Ibn Abdul Aziz, of the Unayzah tribe, and the hereditary chief of Dirayah, who gave him the authority to openly preach to his people. The power of Saud was considerable and the movement of Ibn Wahab had gained many followers.

At the market place of Riyadh, Palgrave found it full of people selling meat, firewood and milk. Half of the shops contained grocery and household articles of use. The stalls of the shoemakers and ironsmiths were open and busily thronged. Riyadh was full of strangers who were foreigners. Some of them had come from Oman and others from Bahrain attending to their businesses in the city. There were camel-drivers from Zulfi, who frequented the roads between Basrah and Zubayr. There were Yemeni peddlers who had come from the way of Wadi Najran and Wadi Dawassir went about its streets selling their wares. Afghanis from Baluchistan and Qandahar waited for companions to cross the eastern part of the desert on their way to the Arabian Gulf. And, there were young students who had come to study at Riyadh who moved about the market place shopping for food.

The scholars read Palgrave account of his journey through the provinces of Najd in 1862 with skepticism when it was first published in France and then in England, and with a feeling of distrust. Palgrave had deliberately perverted facts, and historical incidents and colored his entire narrative with his own personal prejudices and distrust of Arabs although the outlines of what he depicts from his personal observation are for the most part

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(A narrative of a years journey through Central and Eastern Arabia, 1862-3 By William Gifford Palgrave, Late of the 8th Regiment, Bombay N.I. London 1865)

A Pilgrimage To Najd

(Wilfrid Scawen Blunt was born in August 17, 1840. Poet, author, adventurer, and traveler he journeyed for the first time to Spain and then to Italy. After marrying Lady Anne, he set off again for Belgrade in 1873 and then to Constantinople. Soon after he traveled in Algeria and the French Sahara. In the winter of 1875-76 the Blunts paid their first visit to Egypt traveling to Cairo by the old caravan route used by Bedouin camel men. From Egypt the Blunts traveled to Syria and then to Najd. Given below is an account of their experiences as they traveled into the heartland of the Arabian Peninsula)

(An account of their journey, adapted and abridged from the book "Wilfrid Scawen Blunt 1840-1922" written by Edith Finch, and published by Jonathan Cape, Thirty Bedford Square, London in 1938)

The Blunts had made plans to leave for Najd. They set out from Damascus with Muhammad Ibn Aruk, the Tumudri. Hanna acted as the cook. Four big baggage camels and four deluls for riding had accompanied the party along with two camel drivers. Najd had long assumed for them 'the romantic coloring of a holy land.' They also believed it to be the 'original home and birthplace of the Arabian horse.'

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Another reason for setting out for Najd was to search for the living relatives of Muhammad Ibn Aruk of whom nothing had been heard from the past hundred years. Leaving Damascus on December 13, 1878, they traveled through the villages in their caravan, where they were received as friends, members of the Ibn Aruk family, everywhere. Nine days later, they had left civilization with a guide to take them over the black volcanic rock of Harra and the robber-infested Wadi Sirhan. Blunt wanted to explore the area as no European had done before them.

On arriving at Kaf, they allowed the rest of the Caravan to go ahead. Blunt and Lady Anne decided to dismount for a rest and tied their mares to the nearest bush. Suddenly they heard the sound of galloping horses. They were under attack by hostile tribesmen from the area. Soon, the tribal party charged upon them at full gallop and had disarmed them. Their mares were seized. Seeing that resistance was useless, Lady Anne shouted to the nearest horseman "Ana dahilak" (I am under your protection).

As soon as they recovered their breath, the raiders asked who they were and where they had come from. They had told them that they were English and they had come from Damascus. They invited the raiding party chief to visit their caravan, which was close by. Unexpectedly, the horsemen agreed and walked on with their captives to where Muhammad and the servants had positioned themselves behind the kneeling camels. More questions were asked and all was well. The raiders were from the tribe of Shaikh Ibn Shaalan who had been their host the year before, and was obliged with all his men to protect them. Soon, the mares and guns were returned and everyone sat down on the sand to share a plate of dates.

Leaving the Wadi Sirhan the caravan crossed Hamad to al-Jouf. It was a small town that had been conquered by Ibn Rashid, and ruled through his governor. Once there, they managed to locate the long-lost relatives of Muhammad Ibn Aruk. Negotiations were entered into to seek a wife for Muhammad among his relatives. Lady Anne was sent to the harem to look over the possibilities. She came back and reported a young girl who was good tempered, intelligent, and pretty. She had 'dark eyes like a fawn' and 'a particularly open honest look.' Muhammad on hearing this description from Lady Anne at once lost his heart and wanted to marry the girl at any cost. The mahr (dowry) demanded also rose accordingly. A council of relatives from the Aruk family was called at Blunt's tent. After considerable wrangling, it was decided that the girl should be married to Muhammad and fixed a dowry of fifty pounds, which was immediately paid by Blunt.

Three days passed before all difficulties were settled. The marriage was solemnized and the contract was signed. The evening was spent in jubilation. A sheep was killed and eaten. Songs were sung and stories told. In the meantime, the Blunts sought a meeting with the governor of Jouf to obtain his permission to travel to Hail. They presented him with a judicious gift of cloth material and money and he agreed to send a guide with them to see them through the Great Nafud Desert. Later, the governor had invited them to a farewell feast to which the Blunts readily agreed. Carpets were laid out on the roof of the Governors House. A breakfast of boiled meat and rice was served. Finally, accompanied by a guide, they set out on the next and most dangerous part of the journey through the Nafud, the wide desert of sand dunes in Central Arabia.

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Three days passed before all difficulties were settled. The marriage was solemnized and the contract was signed. The evening was spent in jubilation. A sheep was killed and eaten. Songs were sung and stories told. In the meantime, the Blunts sought a meeting with the governor of Jouf to obtain his permission to travel to Hail. They presented him with a judicious gift of cloth material and money and he agreed to send a guide with them to see them through the Great Nafud Desert. Later, the governor had invited them to a farewell feast to which the Blunts readily agreed. Carpets were laid out on the roof of the Governors House. A breakfast of boiled meat and rice was served. Finally, accompanied by a guide, they set out on the next and most dangerous part of the journey through the Nafud, the wide desert of sand dunes in Central Arabia.

There were two ways of crossing the Nafud. The easier march would take them thirteen days, and the difficult one of ten days. The Blunts decided on the ten days route to experience in person the difficulties of travel in the great desert of Arabia. They had also heard of account of people getting lost in it. They had to cover a distance of two hundred miles in the desert. There were two wells on the way, one to be found on the second day of their journey and the other on the eighth day. Providing themselves with skins of water for their mares, men, dates, sheep, bread and some dates, they started on January 12, 1879 for the great desert.

Like a stormy sea, the desert stretched out east and west to the horizon in great waves of red sand. In the springtime, when the sands are covered with green grass, the Bedouins would pasture their flocks there. During that time of the year, their camels would be in milk and they had no need for drinking water. But, in the month of January, only occasional raiding parties would cross the desert. No heavily laden caravan, according to the guide, had ever crossed the Nafud at that point in time. If the camels break down because of lack of water, they would be helpless and unable to journey further.

On the evening of leaving the first well, Blunt warned his men that they had to cross hundred miles of sand before they reached the second well. It was necessary to ration their food and water carefully, if they wanted to cross the desert unscathed. He appointed one of the camel-drivers the task of doling out water in rations every night and not to allow anybody to drink any during the day.

As they covered the first few miles in the desert, they could make out a few camel tracks including that of a horse. They

traveled on the road of Abu Zayd, moving in the general direction of the south, sometimes toiling up on the steep slopes, and at other times making wide detours to avoid a fulj (a deep pit)-always walking on the surface of yielding sand. A thunderstorm on the first evening had packed down the sand, so that the camels could make progress easily and the horses gallop at some speed. During the journey, the Blunts managed to hunt a few rabbits with their greyhound.

Journeying along, their caravan came upon the peaks of Aalem, which were two conical rocks that projected out of the sand and acted as a landmark for the travelers in the desert. Climbing up, they could see the crimson desert stretching out before them as far as the eye could see. To their delight, the Blunts found a colored butterfly clinging to one of the rocks. They reasoned that it must have flown to the area from Hebron for there was no vegetation along the way suited for caterpillars. This area had many sorts of small birds and reptiles.

When they were still two days journey away from the second well the sands dried out. The camels flagged. The men were obliged to dismount and walk. They took it in their stride cheerfully and the Arabs passed their time singing desert songs. The Muslims in the party would stop at intervals to say their prayers. In the meantime, the sand appeared to grow deeper and deeper. They ran short of water. January 19th was a terrible day. Two of the camels could carry no load. One of them had become so weary that it could not even carry its saddle. Had it not been for the extraordinary strength of Hatheran, the gigantic camel in their party on whom most of the extra loads were piled, a greater part of their luggage would have had to be abandoned in the desert.

Uncomplaining, the men struggled through the desert, but they had grown silent. Old Hanna the cook, his feet bare, trudged on valiantly at their side. The Blunts became more disgusted with themselves for lacking the strength of Arabs to walk the distance and were obliged to ride most of the time. The caravan crept on the way at the rate of a little over a mile in an hour. Suddenly, near sunset, the Oasis of Jobba came into view, the oasis towards which their caravan was struggling to reach. If it had not been for the hardening of the sands in the first day's thunderstorm, they surely would have not reached their destination.

To the weary travelers of the desert, Jobba appeared to be the most beautiful village in the world. The oasis had a village set in fortified walls with brilliant green gardens around it, located in the desert sand and backed by the towering rocks of the Nafud desert. Climbing up the cliffs, they could make out the distinct outline of Jabal Shammar-the hills of Najd. The party rested at Jobba and set out for the hills in a leisurely manner. There was no hurry now as they had passed the second well. They traveled making their nights merry with feasting and games held in the open air around great bonfires in the starry night. Three days later, they were in the hills. The mountain air around them was exhilarating and the ground below crisp and firm, a welcome relief to the tired mares traveling until then, in the desert.

Jabal Shammar appeared to Blunt as more beautiful than Mount Sinai. At Hail, they were to hear vague rumors of a Christian stranger having been there just before their arrival, but paid little attention to it and did not learn about the wanderings of Charles Montagu Doughty until nine years later.

Lady Anne wrote in her dairy "no European and no Christian had penetrated as such before us as far as Jabal Shammar and all we knew of the people and the country was the recollection of Palgrave's account of his journey there sixteen years before in disguise."

The Arabs of Jobba had been an inquisitive, ill-mannered lot, and seemed not too eager to be friendly with the travelers in Blunt's caravan, which made the Blunts fearful of the fate that was in store for them at Hail, which was controlled by Amir Ibn Rashid. Blunt sent the guide ahead with letters to the Amir of Hail seeking his permission to visit the town.

After a few days, the guide returned. The Amir had read their letters. He would be delighted to see them and had given instructions to get two houses ready for them to occupy. Reassured, the travelers rode through the gate of Hail. They had until then stayed in villages, in mud hovels shaded by a few tattered palms. The town of Hail made a great impression on the travelers. It was clean, pretty and appeared like a stage set. At the Amir's palace they were met by the Chief of Protocol who appeared dignified and finely costumed, that they took him to be Ibn Rashid himself. He welcomed them with a host of retainers and served them Arabic coffee. They thought they had never seen so many agreeable faces collected together as here in the Amir's palace in Central Arabia.

The Amir entered. He was surrounded by a number of attendants and was tall, lean and gorgeously dressed, a commanding figure. He smiled graciously and exchanged greetings with Blunt, Lady Anne and Muhammad Ibn Aruk. He had a gaunt face, with black knitted eyebrows and remarkable eyes-eyes deep sunk and piercing, like the eyes of a hawk, which

appeared restless moving from one face to another. His hands too were long and constantly fingering the beads that he carried with him.

Soon, he took them to see his gardens, his kitchens and finally he led them to what interested them most of all—his stables. It was made up of a collection of horses purchased from different Arab tribes, as there was no special Najd breed. Unprotected, the animals stood in their stables, with heavy rugs fastened across their chests. Some of the horses stood tethered by their feet, each to a square manger of sun-dried bricks. The Blunts had the opportunity to closely inspect each horse and they appreciated the collection at its worth. The Amir's horses rightly deserved their epithet of "little lions."

They soon became well acquainted with politics of Najd and its personages. Every morning, Blunt made it a point to attend the majlis (the court of assembly or justice). He paid visits to Hamud, the Amir's cousin and sometimes went over to Mubarak's house, the Amir's chief bodyguard. He made friends with others of the palace entourage. Lady Anne spent visiting harems in the town and the Bedouin camps. She spent long hours with the Amir's ladies. She found the Amir's chief wife Amusheh, clever and a lady of distinction. With Hamud's amiable first wife, she drank tea and ate sweet limes.

The Blunts were careful not to venture into town without an escort from the Amir. They had until then experienced only politeness from the people of Hail. Blunt was invited by Ibn Rashid to join his retinue to visit the Persian pilgrims returning back from Hajj. The pilgrims had encamped outside the town and they were spread all over the plain surrounding the town. Sedately, beside Ibn Rashid, they rode out in the plain. It was a

day when the sky overhead was intensely blue and the plains sloped smoothly upwards towards hills that appeared to be carved out of sapphire. Behind them were the battlemented walls of Hail, with the Amir's palace rising from palm trees, almost black in the sunlight. Before them, lay the camp full of multi-colored tents, blue, green, red, and white. The pilgrims from the camp watched their approach with curious half-frightened eyes.

At last, the Amir could not resist the excitement any longer. He galloped towards the crowd along with his men. The Blunts were delighted with the marvelous exhibition of the speed and agility of Ibn Rashid's mares. They had come to Najd in the express hope of watching such an exhibition. Among the pilgrims was their chief, Ali Koli Khan, the son of the great Shaykh of the Bakhtiari, in whose honor as well as in the Blunt's, the Amir had arranged this state visit to the Hajj pilgrims' camp. Determined to continue their journey in Najd, the Blunts sought permission from Ibn Rashid to march with the Hajj pilgrims towards Baghdad, when it departed a few days later. The parting with Ibn Rashid was cordial. Blunt offered to act as a Wakil in Europe to Ibn Rashid in case he required assistance of any kind; and Ibn Rashid, to show his faith in them, sent them on their last day at Hail to see the fortress of Agde, never shown before to any stranger.

On February 1st, they left Hail marching in the vanguard of the Hajj pilgrim's caravan. The procession stretched away like ants across the plain, three miles or more in length. In the front were a few people leading the caravan, respectably dressed who had walked the entire journey to Makkah, out of piety and they were returning back to their cities and towns on foot.

Following them was the banner of Ibn Rashid, the protector of the Hajj camp, moving in the center of magnificently caparisoned dromedaries moving in a fast walk. Last followed, the crowd of pilgrims on their camels, which were four thousand or so in number. The pilgrims were mounted, sometimes two in one camel. Others had a couple of boxes on each side of the camel containing the household furniture that would be required by them when they pitched tents. The better class of pilgrims and all the women, except the very poor, rode on ponies.

Most of the pilgrims were friendly towards the Blunts. The journey with them would have been interesting if the Blunts could have spoken their language or the pilgrims could have spoken Arabic. Already wearied, when they left Hail by their long March from Makkah, most of the pilgrims were in dire straits before half the distance to Merhid, the first town, was covered. The deep white sand wore down the underfed camels. Their way was strewn with dead camels. The sand of the desert was so fine that sandstorms were frequent. In one such sandstorm, the day before reaching Merhid, it was reported to the Blunts that Ali Koli Khan, the chief of the camp had been lost. Later, at Merhid, they learnt that he was still alive though they never met him again.

The Blunts were slightly better off than the other pilgrims for they had purchased enough provisions from Hail to see them to the end of their journey and were able to vary their diet. With the help of their greyhound, and hawk, they managed to hunt down hares, gazelles, and bustards on the way. Their beasts, however, suffered. Almost on the edge of the artificial lake on which Merhid stands, and well within sight of its walls

and the gold domed mosque, the youngest of Blunts camels lay down, too weak to continue its journey further. 'I shall not easily forget his face,' lady Anne wrote in her diary, 'looking wistfully after his companions as they disappeared over the crest of the hill. He is the first of our small party that has fallen out of the ranks, and we are depressed with the feeling that he may not be the last.'

Arriving at Merhid, the Blunts were nearly at the end of their resources of money, patience, and strength. Nevertheless, they hastened on their way to the holy city of Karbala, with no more delay than was necessary to refit their caravan. Passing through Karbala, they reached Baghdad on March 6th making them the first Europeans to have traveled all the way from Hail to Baghdad along the Persian Pilgrims Route.

The journey of Blunts to Najd added considerably to European knowledge of Arabia. They brought back new information about the Arabian horse. Most importantly, they made valuable contributions to geographical science in their book, 'A pilgrimage to Najd,' which cannot be disregarded. They were not observers of Arab life like other Europeans such as Palgrave, Guarmani, and Doughty, nor were explorers well equipped like Wallin, Huber, and Euting. They were not scientifically inclined and carried no instruments except a compass and a barometer. However, they traveled undisguised and were free to take notes and their observation was so accurate that they helped to solve the mystery of the fulj pits of the Nafud desert. But what distinguished from the other travelers was their romantic curiosity and imaginative sympathy for the Bedouin society. They understood the unique quality of the Shammar society of the Najd in contrast with the rest of Arabia, the close relations and community feeling between

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its nomad and town-settled members.

In Najd, the Blunts found a country that was independent, with a government that was suitable and satisfactory to its people, who though poor were contented. 'The political constitution of Jabal Shammar,' wrote Lady Anne in her diary; 'is...unlike anything in Europe, but it is probably unique in Asia. It would seem...to represent some ancient form of government indigenous to the country...sprung naturally from the physical necessities of the land and the character of its inhabitants. I look upon Ibn Rashid's government as in all likelihood identical with that of the kings of Arabia, who came to visit Solomon, and of the shepherd kings who...held Egypt and Babylonia; and I have little doubt that it owes its success to...being...in harmony with Arab ideas and...tradition.'

Except for one flaw-the succession to the throne of the king-the system appeared to Blunt as perfect. In Najd, as nowhere in Europe, were to be found in actual existence liberty, equality, and brotherhood. There were no taxes, no police, no conscription, and no compulsion of any kind to fetter or irritate its inhabitants. The king's rule depended on the citizens' goodwill and his army was made up of their soldiers. 'In short,' as Blunt later wrote, this view 'of the ancient system of free government existing for so many centuries in the heart of that wonderful peninsula was to confirm me in the enthusiastic love and admiration, I already entertained for the Arabian race.'

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